

The Indian on the Reservation in American  
Novels

by

Gertrude Catherine Foley

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE INDIAN ON THE RESERVATION  
IN AMERICAN NOVELS

by

Gertrude Catherine Foley

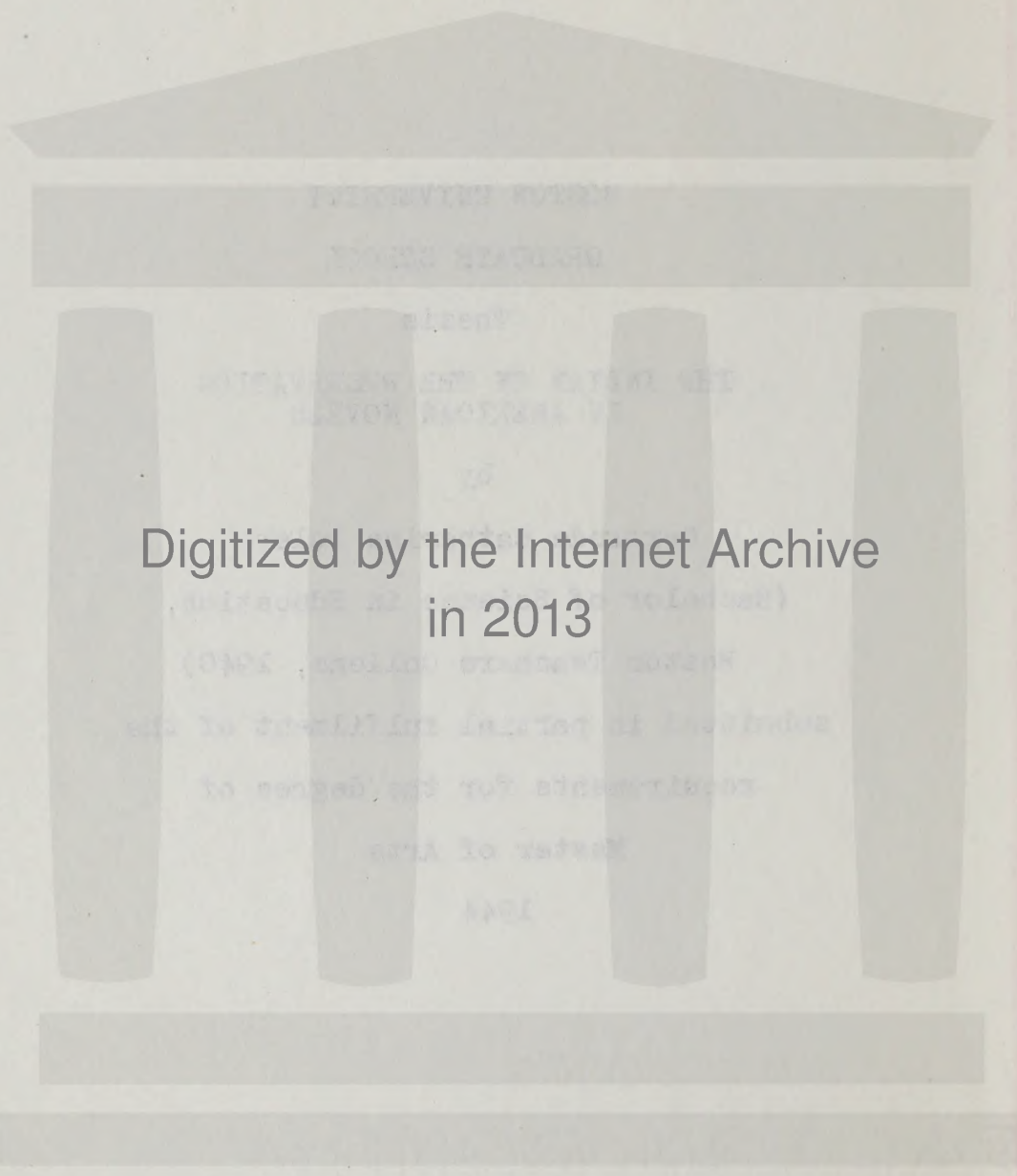
(Bachelor of Science in Education,

Boston Teachers College, 1940)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

1944



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THE INDIAN ON THE RESERVATION  
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## INTRODUCTION

"The North American Indian," said the author of Mr. Picket-Pin And His Friends,<sup>1</sup> "was first the friend, then the enemy, and is now the philanthropic rag-doll of the American people."

Writers of history and fiction have immortalized the Indian of the first two stages. Such men as Rev. John Heckewelder, Francis Parkman and Henry R. Schoolcraft laid the foundations, and since their time ethnological research and general history have continued to swell the vast accumulation of authentic information concerning the Indians. From the characterizations submitted by writers of fiction have come our popularized conceptions of Indians who were first the friends, then the enemies of the American people. So many times the term "Indian" has come to mean a jumble of feathers, tomahawks, painted faces, wild yells and nothing else.

. . . "The small boy," continues Mr. Collier, "dips Cooper into his imagination and dreams of adventures in which a mad jumble of buffaloes, scalps, war-whoops, copper-coloured devils, and rifles with an exaggerated length of barrel, play the prominent parts."<sup>2</sup>

The number and diversity of attempts in delineating the Indian are proof of the power and fascination of aboriginal material. "The red man was either brutalized and portrayed as the arch-fiend," says William J. Snelling, "or sentimentalized and de-

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<sup>1</sup>  
Price Collier, Mr. Picket-Pin And His Friends, (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Company, 1894), p.1.

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid., Intro., p.5.

# INTRODUCTION

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Horn & Horn, 1894), p. 1.

1894, Intro., p. 5.



scribed as a veritable lord of creation living nakedly but nobly beneath the boughs of the forest." <sup>3</sup> Fiction writers of the twentieth century, however, have recognized the fact that the Indian can no longer be a romantic creation, that he has to be a real creature whose substance and sustenance are clearly defined. In other words, the Indian of the first two stages has been depicted as a romantic savage by those who idealized him, as a wily red-skin by those who thought of him as the enemy of the American people, and, only recently, as a real human being by those writers who are anxious to give authentic pictures of Indian life. Romanticists and realists-- to both are we indebted for the development of an autochthonous literature.

The Indian of the third stage, "the philanthropic rag-doll of the American people," is not as well-known as his earlier kin in American fiction. What about this lesser-known third phase in his history, the chapter which records his fate following battle and conflict with white people? Dispossessed of most of his habitat and forced to withdraw to a designated plot, he recedes into the background. Army officers and Indian agents have written countless and voluminous reports on the reservation Indian, but who has made an effort to understand and write about him as though he were something other than a subject for Governmental reports? How many writers have thought of using the American Indian reservation as background material for their stories? Curiosity con-

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<sup>3</sup>  
William J. Snelling, Tales of the Northwest, (Minnesota: The University of Minn. Press, 1936), Intro., p. viii.

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cerning the quantity and quality of fiction dealing with the reservation Indian prompted the writing of this paper. Ramona and Cimarron are titles familiar to all, but beyond these how many reservation stories have achieved any degree of popularity? The reservation chapter is an important one in the saga of the American Indian, and while it is concerned for the most part with more peaceful activities, the elements of novelty and intrigue that made stories of the earlier period so stimulating are not lacking in the accounts of the Government's effort to establish a policy for dealing with Indians hemmed in by reservation boundaries.

The search for materials unearthed the following findings. Very few poets have been interested in the reservation setting. Beyond John G. Neihardt, Lew Sarett and Joaquin Miller the hunt proved fruitless. Other than Hamlin Garland's Book Of The American Indian and Oliver La Farge's collection, All The Young Men, there is little else of great value in the form of short stories. Writers of Juvenile Fiction, slow to utilize reservation material, are just beginning to introduce it to children. Lena Becker Scott, who wrote Dawn Boy Of The Pueblos, and Laura A. Armer, author of Waterless Mountain, are the most noteworthy. Novelistic fiction has yielded the greatest quantity of material. A decision to concentrate upon this particular type limited the work of investigation to full-length novels and novelettes intended for adult reading. All other forms of fiction have been excluded. Works in which the reser-

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vation plays a prominent part have been examined in order to determine just how the various novelists have depicted the reservation Indian and his life on the reservation.

Chronologically, reservation novels fall into two groups; those written between the years 1881 and 1908, dealing with the early reservation period when the Army and the Department of the Interior vied with each other for jurisdiction over the tribes; and those from 1929 to 1942 which depict the maladjustment of the modern reservation Indian. A victim of two conflicting cultures he remains suspended between two worlds, his red and white blood warring in his veins.

Novels of the first group show the relations between the Indians and the United States Government at the time when the red men were being driven and herded into reservations, and their early adjustment to this new kind of life. Novels of this period contain an impeachment of American policy and an exposure of the graft, greed and unscrupulous dealings of Government officials. Such titles as Hidden Power, Senator Intrigue and Inspector Noseby, A Chronicle Of Conquest, express the character of these early novels. From 1908 to 1929 reservation material attracted no one; not a single reservation novel appeared. The zeal with which reformers tackled the Indian Problem in the seventies, eighties and nineties had worked itself out by the turn of the century.

In the twenties a new awakening of interest burst forth once more, both in the field of government and in the literary field. This decade saw the beginning of a change in thought



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In the twenties a new awakening of interest about Indian life came, both in the field of government and in the literary field. This decade saw the beginning of a change in thought



which was to revolutionize our whole concept of Indian Policy. About this time renewed interest in the reservation Indian, this time the modern reservation Indian, attracted modern fiction writers interested in writing novels of "social awareness". Ill-fitted to return to his old way of life and equally unfitted to fit into modern industrial life, the modern reservation Indian makes a fine topic for social study.

Following, arranged according to dates of first appearance, is the list of novels which cover the story of the Indian who lives within the confines of an American Indian reservation.

1881 - Miller, Joaquin	<u>Shadows Of Shasta</u>
1881 - Tibbles, Thomas Henry	<u>Hidden Power</u>
1884 - Jackson, Helen Hunt	<u>Ramona</u>
1890 - Sparhawk, Frances C.	<u>A Chronicle Of Conquest</u>
1892 - Sparhawk, Frances C.	<u>Onoqua</u>
1894 - Sparhawk, Frances C.	<u>Senator Intrigue And Inspector Noseby</u>
1901 - Overton, Gwendolen	<u>The Heritage Of Unrest</u>
1902 - Garland, Hamlin	<u>The Captain Of The Gray-Horse Troop</u>
1908 - Kinkaid, Mary H.	<u>The Man Of Yesterday</u>
1929 - La Farge, Oliver	<u>Laughing Boy</u>
1930 - Ferber, Edna	<u>Cimarron</u>
1934 - Mathews, John J.	<u>Sundown</u>
1936 - McNickle, D'Arcy	<u>The Surrounded</u>
1937 - La Farge, Oliver	<u>The Enemy Gods</u>
1937 - Corle, Edwin	<u>People On The Earth</u>
1942 - Miller, George F.	<u>A Wild Indian</u>

which was to revolutionize our whole concept of Indian Policy. And this time reversed interest in the reservation Indian, this time the modern reservation Indian, attracted modern fiction writers interested in writing novels of "social awareness". It tried to return to his old way of life and equally wanted to fit into modern industrial life, the modern reservation Indian was a tough topic for social study. Following, arranged according to dates of first appearance, is the list of novels which cover the story of the Indian who lives within the confines of an American Indian reservation.

1941 - Miller, Joseph	<u>Shadows of Shasta</u>
1941 - Tibbels, Thomas Henry	<u>Hidden Power</u>
1944 - Jackson, Robert Hunt	<u>Return</u>
1945 - Spaulding, Francis C.	<u>A Chronicle of Conquest</u>
1945 - Spaulding, Francis C.	<u>Unknown</u>
1946 - Spaulding, Francis C.	<u>Senator Indians and Indians</u>
1947 - Overton, Randolph	<u>The Heritage of Umanah</u>
1948 - Jackson, Felix	<u>The Captains of the War-Horse</u>
1948 - Kinkaid, Ray H.	<u>The Man of Yesterday</u>
1949 - As Large, Oliver	<u>Land for Fox</u>
1949 - Fisher, Nina	<u>Umanah</u>
1954 - Kinkaid, John J.	<u>Umanah</u>
1955 - Kinkaid, John J.	<u>The Unsettled</u>
1957 - As Large, Oliver	<u>The Heavy Load</u>
1957 - Ocala, Edwin	<u>People on the Edge</u>
1958 - Miller, Joseph F.	<u>A Wild Indian</u>



The thesis divides itself into four large divisions. The first section contains a résumé of the United States Reservation System, giving the important highlights of governmental policy from the inauguration of the system up to the present. Interpretation of reservation fiction demands a knowledge of actual conditions existing under the System. The second part has been devoted to the authors of the novels under investigation. A few of the writers are well-known, but a number of them are not. This section contains a discussion of the circumstances responsible for their becoming interested in the reservation Indian, their qualifications for writing about him and a first look into their reservation books. The third section reports the manner in which the authors, in their various ways, have handled the story of the reservation Indian, the educational, religious, economic and political phases of his life being considered. The last section concerns itself with an evaluation of the novels studied, their place in the literary field and their influence on the Indian Problem being the two points under discussion.





## CHAPTER I

### THE RESERVATION SYSTEM

An understanding of the fiction writer's viewpoint concerning the reservation Indian is dependent upon a general knowledge of the Reservation System itself. For that reason a résumé has been given here.

About seventy years of the American Indian's history lies in the Indian Reservation. Originally, the word "reservation" meant certain lands from the public domain set aside and reserved for the Indians exclusively. A tribe ceding land to the Government held a specific part of it for itself, this section being "allotted to" or "reserved for" the Indians. In the beginning ample tracts were reserved for the various tribes but land-hungry whites, not content with seizing all the free lands, finally forced the Indians to part with much of their best land at a fraction of its real value. Reservations were diminished or disappeared completely. Tribes were jostled about, moved from their ancestral home sites, consolidated and corraled into tracts half the size of the originals.

The Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the year 1872 contains a vivid explanation of the working out of the Reservation System. Commissioner Francis A. Walker says in part:

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The report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the year 1873 contains a vivid explanation of the working out of the reservation system. Governor Francis A. Walker says in part:

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it was expressly declared that the Indians should be made as comfortable on, and as uncomfortable off, their reservations as it was in the power of the Government to make them; that such of them as went right should be protected and fed, and such as went wrong should be harassed and scourged without intermission. It was not anticipated that the first proclamation of this policy to the tribes concerned would effect the entire cessation of existing evils; but it was believed that persistence in the course marked out would steadily reduce the number of the refractory, both by the losses sustained in actual conflict and by the desertion of individuals as they should become weary of a profitless and hopeless struggle, until, in the near result, the system adopted should apply without exception to all the then roving and hostile tribes.<sup>1</sup>

The principle of isolation contained in the reservation system protected the life and property of both Indians and whites. It reduced the number of Indian raids on frontiersmen and at the same time provided invaluable protection to the red men who, unable to compete with whites on equal terms, had suffered from unregulated racial contact. In the years following the Civil War Indian isolation as a means of protecting the frontier was especially popular and strongly defended, but as the dangers of warfare lessened the advantages of this system of segregation began to be questioned by those interested in the Indian Cause. Reformers of the seventies and eighties, in particular, regretted that isolation was preventing the Indian from learning the ways of white society. As the evils of isolation became more and more apparent means were sought whereby regu-

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Francis A. Walker, "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs," Executive Documents of the House of Representatives for The Third Session of the Forty-Second Congress 1872-1873, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1873), pp. 393-394.



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lated racial contact could be encouraged.

The power of literature of protest cannot be overlooked. In the seventies and eighties it did a great deal to bring about better legislation for the Indians. Humanitarians organized themselves into groups with this purpose in mind. Helen Hunt Jackson, the Harriet B. Stowe of the Indians, saw to it that public sentiment was aroused. The year following her A Century of Dishonor saw the beginning of the Indian Rights Association which is still active. George W. Manypenny contributed to the growing discussion. Fruitful results were attained by the labors of men like Secretary Shurz, Senator Henry L. Dawes and M. Storey of Indiana.

Up to the year 1887 there was no consistent, definite, far-sighted program of reform. Difficulties were met as they arose, without thought of the future. With the passage of the Dawes Severalty Act, our Indian Policy, for the first time, aimed toward a definite goal. A plan of individual ownership, sales of "surplus" land and citizenship for the Indian was to be carried out. Mr. Allan Nevins is reluctant to give much credit to Mrs. Jackson for the passage of the act, but admits that "her impassioned voice may have been largely responsible for the ease with which it was finally achieved."<sup>2</sup>

The Dawes Act provided that Indian Reservations be cut up

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Allan Nevins, "Helen Hunt Jackson, Sentimentalist vs. Realist," American Scholar, 10:284, Summer, 1941.

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into tracts of one hundred sixty acres to heads of families, eighty to unmarried adults and forty to children, with the remaining land open to homestead entry. Under a patent issued by the Government the land was held in trust for twenty-five years. At the end of that period the Indian received a title in fee. There was to be no taxation during the trust period. Citizenship and voting privileges were included but the right to sell or mortgage the allotted land was denied.

In time the original law underwent a number of changes. Allotments were no longer limited to certain classes but given to all. The inalienability clause of the act was removed. Land leasing was permitted. Under the Burke Act of 1906 citizenship was not to be given until the fee patent was issued; and if the Indian was found to be competent in managing his own affairs the fee patent could be given before the twenty-five years were up. Francis Leupp, Commissioner of Indian Affairs under the first Roosevelt, makes an interesting comment on this amendment of 1906:

This amendment, although it could not unmake the Indian citizens already qualified under the law of 1887, swept away for future purposes the absurd feature of that law which, while branding an Indian as not intelligent enough to be allowed to dispose of his own property, gave him a ballot wherewith to dispose of the property of his competent fellow citizens. 3

The General Allotment Act fell far short of what its orig-

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3

Francis Leupp, "Indian Policy of the United States," Cyclopedia of American Government, 1914 edition, II, p.164.

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The General Allotment Act fell far short of what its origi-



inal planners had hoped it would accomplish. Instead of acting as an expedient for saving Indian land from expropriation and encouraging the process of assimilation it did precisely the opposite of what it professed to be its aim. From 1887 to 1933 the operation of the General Allotment Act brought about disintegration of the Indian estate and the impoverishment of the Indian people. Commissioner John Collier reviews the working out of the Allotment Act as follows:

After the General Allotment Act individualized land began to slip out of the Indian owner's hands at high speed. When the trust expired he disposed of his land in short order, spent the proceeds and went to live with his relatives. And when an allotted Indian dies, the usual impossibility to make an equitable partition of the land forced its sale not to the Indian but to those who had money to buy, to waiting white people. Thus allotment dissipated, continues to dissipate the Indian estate<sup>4</sup>.

Mr. Collier points out that in 1887 the Indians were the owners of 136,340,950 acres of the best land. In 1933 they had 47,311,099 acres of which fully 20,000,000 is desert or semi-desert. Of usable land still owned by allotted Indians a full three-fourths is possessed and used by whites under the allotment system. Since 1887, one hundred fifty thousand Indians have been rendered totally landless. Allotted areas include all the Indian country of Oklahoma, nearly all the Indian country of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska and Kansas, Wyoming, Oregon, Washington and California.

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<sup>4</sup> John Collier, "Indians At Work," Survey Graphic, 23:264, June, 1934.



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 dian people. Commissioner John Collier reviews the working out  
 of the Allotment Act as follows:

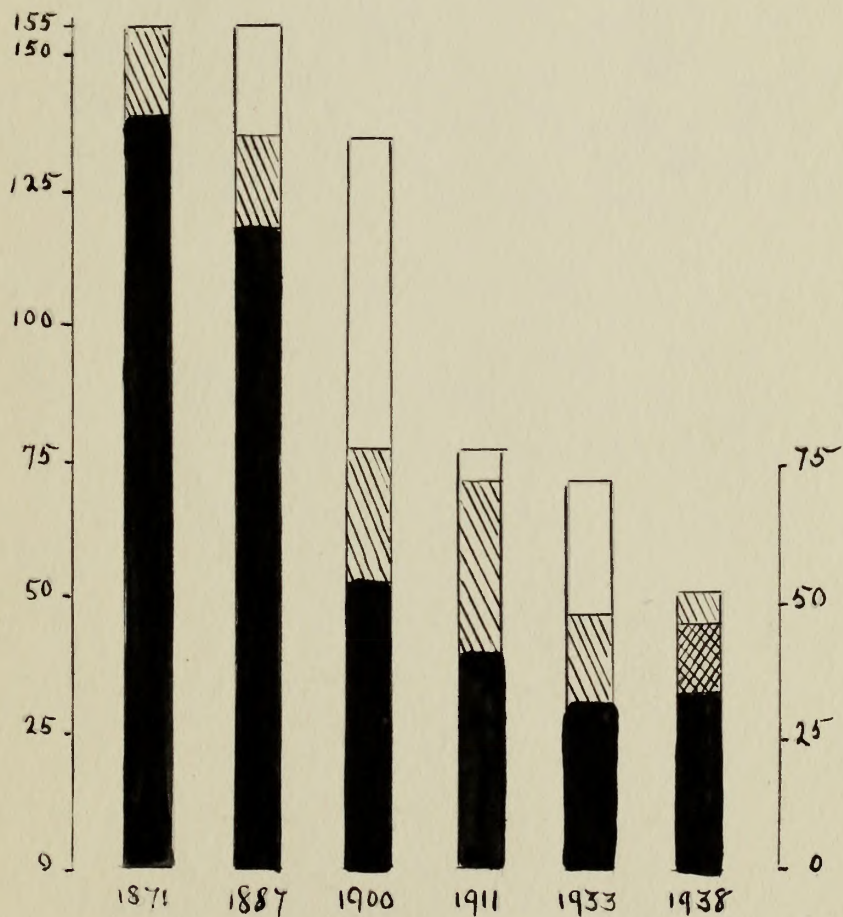
After the General Allotment Act individualized land  
 began to slip out of the Indian owner's hands at high  
 speed. When the trust expired he disposed of his land  
 in short order, spent the proceeds and went to live with  
 his relatives. And when an allotted Indian dies, the  
 usual propensity to make an improvident partition of the  
 land forced first sale not to the Indian but to those who  
 had money to pay, to waiting white people. Thus allot-  
 ment disorganized, continues to dissipate the Indian estate.  
 Mr. Collier points out that in 1887 the Indians were the  
 owners of 156,340,250 acres of the best land. In 1933 they had  
 47,311,092 acres of which only 20,000,000 is desert or semi-  
 desert. Of valuable land still owned by allotted Indians a full  
 three-fourths is possessed and used by whites under the allot-  
 ment system. Since 1887, one hundred fifty thousand Indians  
 have been rendered totally landless. Allotted areas include all  
 the Indian country of Oklahoma, nearly all the Indian country  
 of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska and Kansas, Wyoming, Oregon,  
 Washington and California.



# LOSS OF INDIAN RESERVATION LANDS

- Lost since previous date
- Allotted, not yet lost
- Allotted, protected by Reorganization and Oklahoma Acts
- Tribal lands

Millions  
of  
Acres

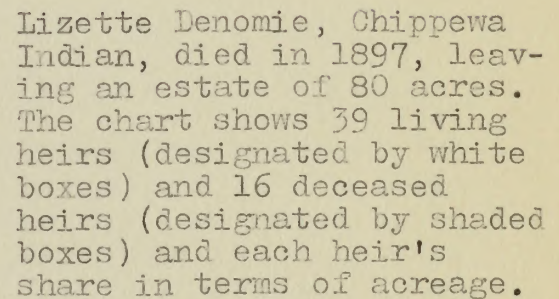


( U.S. Indian Service )





HEIRSHIP ESTATE OF LIZETTE DENOMIE



(Adapted from chart by U.S. Indian Service)





Back in 1862 Secretary Stanton called the administration of Indian Affairs a "sink of iniquity", and Abraham Lincoln expressed his intention of beginning Indian Reform as soon as the Civil War was won. Agitation for reform continued but it was not until the nineteen-twenties that any definite signs of the formation of a new, more sensible policy actually came into view. Slowly, from then on, long established lines of action were put into reverse. For over a century our aim had been to "Americanize" the Indian. Tribal government was destroyed. Communal land tenure was broken up. Ancient ceremonies and religion were suppressed. Native arts were discouraged. The institution of the government boarding-school nearly destroyed Indian family life. The Indians as a race were on the road to extinction. The new policy casts aside the idea of Americanization of the Indian. Tribal life is encouraged. Decreased federal control and greater self-government by the Indians themselves is the aim of the new system. Indian initiative and resourcefulness are being encouraged.

President Hoover appointed to the Indian Office commissioners of a wholly new type, pledged to a reform program. Until his time the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs had been a political plum to be handed to a good party member. Hoover broke this practice by appointing Charles J. Rhoads, Commissioner, and J. Henry Scattergood Assistant Commissioner. Both men were Quakers, and both had been Directors of the Indian Rights Association. Moving slowly of necessity, harassed by a Congress gen-

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erally hostile, these men laid the ground-work and made necessary transitions for changes now taking place. Under this administration the idea embodied in the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 was born.

When Congress, in 1934, passed the bill that is known as the Indian Reorganization Act further reforms in the Indian Service were made easier. Five topics are covered in the provisions of the Act.

(1) Land: No further allotments are to be made to individuals. Certain unsettled reserve lands are to be restored to tribal ownership. Added land may be purchased.

(2) Government:

Indians are given the right to organize themselves for mutual benefit and when so organized to enjoy self-government and federal guardianship.

(3) Business:

Tribes are given the right to incorporate for business purposes. A loan fund is made available for incorporated communities in order that they may be started along the road to self-support.

(4) Education:

Gifted Indians may borrow funds for "advanced" education.

(5) Civil Service:

The Secretary of the Interior may establish special Civil Service rules to make it easier for Indians to enter the Indian Service.

Tribes were not forced to accept the Act but given the right to vote on it. One hundred ninety-two out of two hundred sixty-nine tribes accepted it immediately. Today seventy-four per cent of the Indians are living and functioning under the Act.





Early efforts at reform had been directed toward fair practices for the Indians in their dealings with whites and the absorption of the aborigines into white society. Early reformers had hoped for rapid absorption, but present day administrators realize that assimilation is going to be a long-term process, and that we will have reservations with us for a long time to come. The white man thought that the Indian should learn his way of life, imitate his mode of living, but he recognizes now the fact that there is much in Indian culture and traditions which should never have been destroyed and allowed to die. Educating the Indian to an appreciation of his own heritage, to the efficient use of his native resources and in the development of new sources of self-support are the first steps on the long road of rehabilitation which lies ahead.

Since 1934 there has been a complete right-about-face in Indian administration. Desperate efforts have been made to restore ruined land and to retain the land and resources still remaining to the Indian. With the present administration "conservation conscious" great strides are being made in aiding the Indian to become self-supporting through intelligent use of his land.

Today there are approximately 337,000 Indians in the United States. About 241,000 live on reservations. There are some concentrations in the East, but the majority are west of the Mississippi. Three states, Oklahoma, Arizona and New Mexico contain nearly half the entire Indian population, while large groups are found in California, Minnesota, Montana, South





Dakota, Wisconsin and Washington. Varying in size from that of the Navajo which is about twenty-five thousand square miles to plots of a square mile or two in California, Indian Reservations dot the map of the whole western half of our country. In the novel, A Wild Indian, George Miller has described the geographic locations of these various western reservations in picturesque style:

The map of that region shows the mighty Missouri River like a three-thousand mile, kinky clothesline, running eastward in some sections and southward in others, the upper end tied to the Rockies and the lower to the Mississippi River. Strung along on that line on the map from the Rockies to Kansas are a dozen pieces of flat wash of various sizes--napkins, towels, and sheets-- some on one side and some on the other, and two or three spread across on both sides. Long spaces of line are bare. A northeast wind came up after the wash was hung out, it seems, and the clothespins did not hold, because to the west and south in Arizona, New Mexico, California, and other places the wash is scattered on the ground-- some pieces only the size of dolls' handkerchiefs and others as large as giants' double sheets.

A closer look at the map shows that the pieces are labeled Indian Reservations--areas on which in early days, Government soldiers herded the Indians to protect white settlers. 5





## CHAPTER II

### NOVELISTS' BACKGROUNDS AND OVERVIEWS OF THEIR BOOKS

Facts concerning the novelists' backgrounds, the manner in which they happened to become interested in the reservation Indian and their reasons for writing about him, together with overviews of their books, are set forth in this section.

John Mathews, Oliver La Farge and D'Arcy McNickle are well-qualified to write on the Indian because of first-hand knowledge. Edna Ferber's was merely superficial. To write an adequate tale of Indians "a man must live, emphatically live, with Indians; share with them their lodges, their food, their blankets, for years," declared William Snelling.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of novelists were interested in the Indian because they were reformers at heart. Thomas H. Tibbles had espoused abolitionism, Hamlin Garland the Granger Movement.

Grouping the novelists under one heading shows up their great diversity. They range from the daughter of Whittier's physician to an Osage Indian graduate of Oxford. The author of So Big and Show Boat has very little in common with the author of A Wild Indian, George Miller, employed as Supervisor of Indian Schools for five years. Except for the fact that at some

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<sup>1</sup>  
William J. Snelling, Tales of the Northwest, Preface, p. 3.





point in their careers they all had a common interest in the Indian, there would be no other reason for uniting them under one single heading.

### Oliver La Farge

Perhaps the most outstanding in Indian Affairs is Oliver La Farge, ethnologist, sociologist and novelist, who became Director of the National Association on Indian Affairs in 1930, and President of its successor, the American Association on Indian Affairs, in 1937.

Mr. La Farge has made three archaeological expeditions for Harvard to the Indian regions in the West. His experiences with the Indians provided him with a wealth of material not only for his books on archaeology but also for his fictional works. His knowledge of Indian dialects, rites and practices has made him extremely valuable in the field of archaeology. For this reason leading anthropologists are more than anxious that he remain an anthropologist, writing in a scientific manner, and that he give up his interest along fictional lines.

In addition to his books on archaeology are the two novels, Laughing Boy (1930). and The Enemy Gods which appeared in 1937. A short story, Haunted Ground, took the O. Henry Memorial prize for 1930. In 1935 a collection of short stories, All The Young Men, appeared. As Long As The Grass Shall Grow (1940) is





a vivid account of the present situation of the Indians and is copiously illustrated with photographs showing the various phases of everyday life. In 1942 Mr. La Farge served as editor of The Changing Indian, a symposium arranged by the American Association On Indian Affairs. Oliver La Farge's mission as a writer is summed up by saying he brought to his work "accurate observation, sensitive understanding of the complex Indian psychology and respect for their cultural dignity."<sup>2</sup>

Laughing Boy is the story of two young Navajos living today on the Navajo Reservation in the Southwest. Plot depends for its incident and development upon them and upon other Indian characters with white men appearing only incidentally. Underlying the story is a strong indictment of American policy. By exalting the virtues of Navajo civilization and criticizing the efforts of white society to thrust its civilization upon the red La Farge points out the white man's mistake in thinking his is a superior culture. Laughing Boy remains a Navajo, speaking and thinking solely in Navajo, but Slim Girl, the heroine of the story, and all the other Indian characters who are exposed to white civilization, are the victims of tragedy.

Much like Laughing Boy, The Enemy Gods has a thesis, also. Criticism of the white man's efforts to remold the Indian in his own image and vindication of the hero's solution of his problem



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"Good and Bad Indians," Time, 30:78, October 22, 1937.



by complete reversion to the ways of his ancestors tell the reader once again that white society is the villain. The enemy gods are the two powers, Indian and white, struggling in the soul of the Navajo schoolboy. The story of Big Salt's son is carried through from the time he becomes Myron Begay at the age of six, on his arrival at the government boarding-school, to his thorough-going resumption of his Navajo status as Seeing Warrior in his twenties. In a way The Enemy Gods is The Education of Henry Adams, Navajo. The novel is a fictionalized account of problems which, as a man actively in touch with the government side of Indian life, Mr. La Farge is familiar. The opening pages are filled with successions of Indian Service brutalities, stupidities and intrigues. The author brings out not only the wrongs of earlier Indian policy but the way in which some parts of those wrongs are being corrected. In the end, because of Myron's love of the Indian girl, the Indian youth decides to help the Navajos learn scientific methods of sheep-herding, farming and sanitation in order that they may continue to exist on their desert territory. Unlike the majority of novels written on the contemporary Indian suspended between his world and the white man's this one ends on a note of hope. Laughing Boy is a novel which could be written only after 1934, the year in which the Indian Reorganization Act was passed.

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who draw their local color from ethnological monographs and ten<sup>3</sup> day excursions into Indian country. Stanley Vestal informs us that Edna Ferber's brief sojourn into the West, preparatory to the writing of Cimarron, was well advertised in advance, and the welcoming natives provided her with a good show. Mr. Vestal feels that it is just as well that her visit was a short one for if she had remained much longer she could hardly have avoided knowing that she was being made the victim of extravagant West-<sup>4</sup>ern humor.

Miss Ferber began her career as a reporter on the Appleton Daily Crescent in Wisconsin, at the age of seventeen, and it must have been her unerring sense of news values which enabled her to see great possibilities in a yarn which would tell the story of the Oklahoma Run. Cimarron Miss Ferber calls her story. The name itself (Spanish for wild, unruly, desperate) was applied to certain lawless regions of the Southwest. Texas cattlemen from the late sixties into the eighties had to traverse the Cimarron. The nearly 2,000,000 acres of old Indian treaty-lands opened to settlement at the time of the first great

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Walter Stanley Campbell (pen name, Stanley Vestal) educator and author. "He is considered a leading authority on the old Southwest, particularly Oklahoma and New Mexico, and especially on the Indians of that territory." Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, editors, Twentieth Century Authors, (New York: H.W. Wilson & Company, 1942), p.242.

4

Stanley Vestal, "Miss Ferber's Myth," Saturday Review of Literature, 6:841, March 22, 1930.







"run" (April 22, 1889) were within the vague Cimarron or its wide penumbra. Edna Ferber sets definite limits by referring to "that sinister strip, thirty-four miles wide and almost two hundred miles long."<sup>5</sup>

Big, hearty, handsome Yancey Cravat, with his romantically shrouded and whispered-about past, swung out of the lawless Cimarron and swept Sabra Venable off her feet when he came to Wichita, Kansas, in the middle eighties. These two unusual and sharply contrasted figures are set down into the new little town of Osage to work out their own destiny and that of the state. In Yancey the red men have a strong champion. Through his oratory and in his newspaper, the Wigwam, he sought redress of the wrongs inflicted upon them.

Edna Ferber's interest in the aborigines was a secondary one. She had no real reason for centering attention upon the reservation Indian except to include him as a necessary part of the colorful background of her story, a background of disinherited Indians, driven by the Government into the most barren land of all, coming at last, by an ironic turn of fate, into that bewildering wealth brought about by the discovery of oil.

#### John Joseph Mathews

In Cimarron the story of the Osage was recorded by an outsider, one not too familiar with the background of the tribe, but in Wah'Kon-Tah and Sundown John Mathews has given us authen-

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<sup>5</sup>

Edna Ferber, Cimarron, p.11.







tic information concerning the tribe of which he is a member. Mr. Mathews is able to write about the Indian from the inside, with a vividness of Indian feeling.

John Joseph Mathews was born next door to the Agency on the Osage Reservation in Oklahoma. He has a white strain through his grandfather who appears in Western history as "Old Bill Williams". Early schooling was received on the Reservation. Later, Mathews graduated from the University of Oklahoma and received a degree in Natural Science from Oxford.

Through Wah'Kon-Tah he has sought to bring out the fact that the old way of life was beautiful, that the white man has scarcely improved upon the Osage mode of living. "Wah'Kon-Tah" is the Great Spirit of the Osage, thought of not so much as a Being, but as a pervasive, enveloping Presence coloring all the tribal life with divinity. Mr. Mathews' narrative has been built around the journal which Major Laban J. Miles began in 1878 when he came as Indian Agent to the last reservation of the Osage. At his death, in 1931, the Major bequeathed the journal to John Mathews, one of his favorites among the Indians. Through the medium of a series of sketches the author gives a statement of the problems and injustices which this particular tribe faced after they had left their lands in Kansas and had become settled in the Indian Territory. The story is focused through the central figure, the sympathetic, intelligent Quaker agent who happened to be an uncle of ex-President Hoover. In Wah'Kon-Tah Mr. Mathews has succeeded in presenting the many





fine traits of his people, the once powerful Osage tribe, a tribe whose relations with the United States Government have been marred far less frequently by violent struggle than have those of most of the Plains tribes.

In Sundown Mr. Mathews has taken up where Wah'Kon-Tah left off. Chal Windzer, a young Indian with some white blood but fundamentally Osage, is the hero of the story. "He shall be a challenge to the disinheritors of his people,"<sup>6</sup> said his father when he bestowed the name "Challenge" upon him at birth. But Chal never fulfilled that fond hope of his father's. He, like all the other young Osage youths, became confused and bewildered by false values and were submerged by the devastating flood of gold which carried the whole tribe to its ruin.

Throughout Sundown runs the thread of despair, as a fine civilization is destroyed by alien ideals and customs that cannot take its place. With dignity and honesty Mathews chronicles the maladjustment and human waste among the younger generation with its wealth-nurtured interests. Just as Major Miles looked upon the discovery of oil as "the last play of the fate that pursued the Osage people"<sup>7</sup> John Mathews considers the

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<sup>6</sup>  
John J. Mathews, Sundown (New York: Longmans, Green & Company, 1934), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup>  
John J. Mathews, Wah'Kon-Tah (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932), p. 324.







period following the discovery of oil nothing but a garish closing scene in the dramatic story of a once proud and glorious nation.

### D'Arcy McNickle

The Osage have a very able spokesman in one of their own tribesmen, John J. Mathews; the Flatheads, or Salish people, have found theirs in D'Arcy McNickle. Mr. McNickle was born forty years ago on the Flathead Reservation up in the mountain country of northwest Montana and attended the Government Indian School there.

The Flatheads call the region in which they live the valley of "Sniel-emen". This valley lies within the original Jocko Indian Reservation and was the seat of a once famous St. Mary's Mission founded nearly one hundred years ago by the Jesuits under the leadership of Pierre J. DeSmet. "Sniél-emen" translated means "Mountains of the Surrounded". In years past the Blackfeet had surrounded and killed many of the Salish people. Mr. McNickle has chosen "Sniél-emen" as the title of his novel, using the term not only literally but figuratively. The Salish may have been overcome by their hereditary enemy, the war-like and predatory Blackfeet, but a far more sinister force, white man's civilization, has surrounded and crushed a powerful people until very little remains of their rich heritage. Their tribal integrity gone, all hope of restoring their shattered life gone, they live on in a desultory and formless fashion.





Mr. McNickle says, through his mouthpiece Archilde Leon:

If they [the white people] would walk through Indian town- that part of St. Xavier given over to crumbling log cabins and dogs and Indians, with the high brick church over-towering all- they would see that one summer was like another. In years of abundance no less than in lean years, the Indians sat in their dark doorways with no expectations, looking out upon a world of meaningless coming and going. 8

Like La Farge's Laughing Boy and The Enemy Gods, The Surrounded presents a picture of two opposing cultures. A modern Indian youth, confused and perplexed, is suspended between two worlds. White and red blood are continually at war within his veins. Archilde Leon has been brought up by the missionary priests and educated at the agency school. He wandered off to Portland and was making his living playing jazz in an Indian quartet. But a strong desire to return to the reservation for one last visit proved to be the downfall of Archilde Leon. He knew it was dangerous to come, but he would stay only a little while, hunt, fish, climb hills, do all the things which had made up his life as a boy, and then go away forever, keeping the memory of those things. Archilde came home to his people, was caught in a chain of destructive forces impossible to break. The story of his destruction progresses with the inevitability of a Greek tragedy. In the downfall of Archilde Mr. McNickle has centered the picture of the destruction of his whole tribe.





### Cincinnatus Hiner Miller

Helen Hunt Jackson was interested in the Mission Indians of California but Joaquin Miller came to the aid of those living in northern California. Cincinnatus Hiner Miller's whole life was inextricably interwoven with that of the American native. His sympathies had always been with them, and in the course of time he himself became almost thoroughly Indian. His semi-autobiographical introduction to the Bear edition of his Poems (1909), Memory And Rime (1884), Shadows of Shasta (1881) and the extensive Life Among The Modocs (1873) furnish many clues to his career among the Indians, but we can never be sure how much is true and what part is fiction.

Indian influence was felt early. His Quaker father, the direct opposite of the numerous whites who hovered around reservations seeking their own gains, was on the best of terms with the Indians of the Miami Reservation and with those of the river valleys in Ohio and Indiana. In 1852, fired by an account of the explorations of Captain Fremont and his guide, Kit Carson, Cincinnatus' father took his family west. After traveling three thousand miles in seven months they settled in the Wilamette Valley of Oregon. At fourteen Cincinnatus ran away to lead a wild, free life among the Indians, miners and settlers of the Shasta Mountain region. To reconcile the various and often contradictory statements concerning his Indian experiences is an impossible task. He is supposed to have been nursed back to health by the mountain Indians after having been severely wounded. While living among them he learned about the Indian





Problem from an Indian point of view. At one time in his career he entertained the wild dream of establishing a sort of Indian Republic, at the foot of Mount Shasta, in which all surrounding tribes were to be gathered out of reach of white man's influence and treachery.

In the very first sentence of the Introduction to Shadows Of Shasta Miller states his purpose in writing the novel:

Why this book? Because last year, in the heart of the Sierras, I saw women and children chained together and marched down from their cool, healthy homes to degradation and death on the Reservation. 9

With vehemence he denounces such transfers. "It is impossible to write with composure or evenness on this subject. One wants to rise up and crush things." <sup>10</sup> Shadows Of Shasta tells, in story form, the desperate attempts made to prevent the return of two Indian waifs, Carrie and little Stumps, to the reservation from which they had escaped. Old Forty-nine, the miner who played the part of foster father to them both, manages to retrieve Carrie after the children had been captured a second time, but poor Stumps succumbs to the unhealthy environment of the damp, dismal reservation situated at the edge of an alkali lake. When Miller records the feeling of the two children toward reservation life he is expressing his own:

The children had but one thing to dread. There was but one terrible word to them in the language. It was not

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9

Joaquin Miller, Shadows Of Shasta Intro., p.7.

10

Ibid., p. 15.





hunger, not starvation,- no, not even death. It was the RESERVATION! That one word meant to them, as it means to all who are liable to be carried there, captivity, slavery, degradation, and finally death, in its most dreadful form. 11

### Thomas Henry Tibbles

The Ponca Indians, a minor tribe, were not of great importance in themselves, but the excitement aroused by complications resulting from their disastrous removal in 1877 was responsible not only for the linking of Thomas Henry Tibbles' name to the Indian Crusade but also for that of Helen Hunt Jackson's entering the field. To understand this point a brief account of the Ponca Removal which took place during the administration of Carl Schurz is necessary. Carl Schurz worked untiringly to improve the lot of helpless tribes so maltreated under President Grant's administration, but events following the Ponca Removal made him appear, in the eyes of over-enthusiastic reformers, the enemy rather than the friend of the red man. Unwilling to agree that Government control over Indians was no longer necessary, Secretary Schurz became the bitter target of those who felt a thorough reformation of American Indian policy should take place as rapidly as possible.

Nine years before Carl Schurz became Secretary of the Interior a blundering Congressional enactment had granted the Sioux Indians a reservation comprising lands belonging to the Poncas. The day before Mr. Schurz took office Congress tried to





remedy that mistake by passing a law which ordered the removal of the Poncas to the Indian Territory. The Poncas would never have stirred national interest if their troubles had ended with removal to the Indian Territory. In an attempt to return to their old Dakota home, a small band under Chief Standing Bear were pursued and ordered back by United States troops. General Crook, a warm friend of the Indians, enlisted the aid of Thomas H. Tibbles, editor of the Herald and member of the Indian Committee in Omaha, in resisting the orders from the Department of the Interior for the forcible return of Standing Bear and his group to Indian Territory. Mr. Tibbles and two Omaha lawyers, A.J. Poppleton and John L. Webster, secured a writ of habeas corpus to prevent the chief's return. The principle which Mr. Tibbles hoped would be decided in the Standing Bear Case was of vital importance. If the courts accepted his argument that Indians who deserted their tribes were free from government interference, then federal control over tribes would soon be at an end. When the writ was upheld in court, reformers who were convinced that all Indians should be freed immediately from government control pressed on to accomplish that aim. Government officials who were opposed offered strong opposition.

Helen Hunt Jackson was but the most earnest and aggressive of many philanthropic people who sprang forward at this point to demand that the Poncas be restored to their original home. She raised funds to defend Standing Bear in the courts and sent Secretary Schurz an indignant demand that he aid the Poncas to re-





turn. Secretary Schurz felt that by keeping the Poncas in the Indian Territory he was acting in their best interests. He believed (1) another journey a thousand miles overland for this tribe which had already been pushed about so much would be a poor form of kindness (2) it would be unwise to allow the Poncas to return in view of the fact that the Sioux had already established themselves in the old Ponca Reservation (3) the tribe would be better off remaining where they were because he had succeeded in obtaining a new and more fertile tract for them within the Indian Territory.

Mr. Tibbles gave up his profession and applied all his energies and means to the launching of country-wide agitation to overthrow the old system of governing the Indian and to right the wrongs they had endured. Accompanied by his wife, Susette La Flesche, the highly gifted daughter of Joseph La Flesche, last recognized chief of the Omahas, he came East on a speaking tour. Through forceful addresses the two aroused such interest that an investigation of the Ponca Case was finally carried through by a senate committee. Boston was particularly interested in Mr. Tibbles' plea. Governor John Long presided over an indignation meeting held in Tremont Temple, and Mayor Prince spoke against Carl Schurz. Letters were read from Edward E. Hale and Senator Dawes of Massachusetts. Wendell Phillips made eloquent pleas. In public letters to Governor Long and Mrs. Jackson Carl Schurz explained that progress must be gradual, that sudden changes would prove most harmful to the Indian, and that the policy of Federal guardianship must continue.





Previous to his gaining national prominence as friend of the Poncas Mr. Tibbles had had a highly varied career. Nor were the Indians the first to benefit from the ardent efforts of this social reformer. Fired with an enthusiasm for abolitionism, he had joined the caravan sent by Henry Ward Beecher to colonize Kansas in the interest of the free-state people, and had shared in the guerilla warfare waged between abolitionists and slave factions on the Kansas-Missouri border. He went to the aid of Nebraska farmers, who suffered from the grasshopper scourges of the middle seventies, by touring the East soliciting funds for them. In 1904 he was to be Populist candidate for vice-president. As journalist, lawyer, pullman car conductor, circuit rider, guide and scout, Thomas Tibbles' life had been an interesting one. As champion of any humane cause he expressed great fierceness of feeling toward injustice and wrong. His novel, Hidden Power, which appeared in 1881, is an exposé of the graft, intrigues and secret workings of an Indian ring which had three important departments of the Government under its control.

"You undertook too big a job," said Dawson, "when you went into a contest with the Indian Ring. You see they have called to their aid three of the departments of the Government- the War Department, the Interior Department and the Department of Justice. All of them have been forced to do their bidding. No single individual has any chance in such a contest. Back of all that, they control all the avenues of information to the people at large, and thus control public opinion. 12







Helen Hunt Jackson

Mrs. Jackson's participation in the Ponca Case was but her initiation into the larger crusade which sought the betterment of the lot of all Indians. At the age of fifty she had begun to enlist all her remarkable energies in their behalf and the rest of her life was given over completely to the Indian Cause. Had not the Indian crossed her path at this time some other cause would have caught her interest.

Her Century of Dishonor, appearing soon after G.W. Many-penny's Our Indian Wards was a sketch of the United States' dealings with twelve important Indian tribes, covering the period just after the Revolution, when the Delawares and Cheyenne had been the victims of the government's endless change of policies and constant vacillations. Two years later, with Abbott Kenney of Los Angeles, she investigated and reported on the conditions and needs of the Mission Indians of California. Her report, like countless others preceding hers, was filed away to gather dust in the office of the Department of the Interior.

Determined to arouse public sentiment somehow, and drive home her plea for the red man, she reworked her findings into story form, using the novel as a vehicle of her propaganda. Far more effective than any report could have been, it proved to be an important contribution to the cause of Indian reform. In A Century of Dishonor Mrs. Jackson had been forced to follow government records; in Ramona she was free to adapt the materials





to her purpose. Ramona turned out to be one of the most popular novels of the decade. Readers forgot the book was written as an expose of the Indian Bureau in its Californian activities, so fascinating was it as a romance.

Ramona is the story of a pure-hearted, half-breed Indian girl won by Alessandro Assis, whom the influx of ruthless Americans settlers had driven into temporary insanity and tragic death at the hands of a ruffian. The early chapters present a series of pictures descriptive of life on a great, semi-feudal estate of the days just before conquest when the Americans were pouring into the newly-annexed domain. Mexican culture crumbles before the onslaught of the new-comers, and its downfall is but a continuation of that decay of the missions which had set in with the despoiling under the Secularization Act, long before  
13  
the coming of the white settlers.

The second half of the novel describes the wrongs suffered by the Mission Indians, those Indians who lived in the region about the little town of San Diego. After the Secularization Act, many continued living right where they were, on the same farms, or in villages in the surrounding hills and valleys. American occupation of this territory meant that certain tracts, formerly belonging to the Missions, were declared Government property by the United States Land Commission,

The Secularization Edict of 1834 had appropriated the bulk of Church property to the Government.





in 1856, and other sections were recognized as grants to Spanish and Mexican owners. Indians living on either were not bothered for awhile, but when white squatters sought homesteads, and Spanish and Mexican owners wanted to sell, the Indians were in a sorry plight. They knew nothing of a law which had been passed previously, requiring that they register and file upon their lands. They had merely continued to live on their little plots as their fathers had done before them. Now, without warning, they were to be evicted.

Land on which the village of Alessandro's tribe stood was adjudged by the Court in San Francisco to belong to American settlers. Forcible ejection from Temecula marked the beginning of an "odyssey of woes" for Alessandro's family, driven from place to place by the American onrush. The story of the Indians' loss of home and possessions at Temecula, and their dispossession again at San Pasquale, is a pathetic one.

### Hamlin Garland

With a firmer grasp of actual conditions than was possessed by the author of Ramona, Hamlin Garland has made a stronger plea for the rights of the red men. First-hand acquaintance, especially with the Plains tribes, and close observation of the Indian way of life provided him with a sympathetic insight into their problems. The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop, The Book of the American Indian, the autobiographical A Daughter of The Middle Border and Companions On The Trail are the best sources of information concerning Garland's life among the In-







dians, and his attitude toward the red men. He never shared the settler's view of the Indian as being nothing more than a species of wild beast which should be exterminated. Nor did he consider white settlers, so-called pioneers, martyrs in the cause of civilization. As far as he was concerned they were either poor or degenerate whites with not the slightest interest in their primitive neighbors, or greedy cattlemen who expected to fatten their stock under protection of the military. Garland's interest in the cause of the oppressed Indian, however, was secondary to that all consuming passion of his life- the Middle Border and the rebellion it bred.

To obtain source materials for The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop and The Book of the American Indian, Garland visited reservations and received help from agents and army officers. They, in turn, made it possible for him to gain the confidence of leading warriors. At Lame Deer Agency in Montana he contacted Major George Stouch, and spent many hours with the Cheyenne chiefs, American Horse, White Bull and Two Moon, discussing their future as well as their past. John Seger, instructor of the Southern Cheyenne and Arapahoes, a fluent and habitual sign talker, gave Garland some of his ideas for use in building the character of the hero of The Gray-Horse Troop. The Indian policeman, Wolf Voice, who once served as guide to Frederick Remington, the great painter of the Indian, proved most helpful. At Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota, Garland secured his information for his story of Sitting Bull from persons closely associated with the Sioux chief. A French-Canadian,







Carrigan, had taught school near the chief's camp and had often entertained him. More detailed and intimate glimpses were given by Slohan, annalist of the tribe and leader of "The Silent Eaters", Sitting Bull's bodyguard. The story entitled The Silent Eaters is the story of Sitting Bull's life and death as narrated by one of his partisans.

Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop is fiction with a strong moral purpose in view. Under the cloak of love and adventure on a western reservation lies a protest of America's unjust treatment of the red man. On the accession of a Reform Administration Major George Curtis is appointed Indian Agent of the Tetongs at old Fort Smith, near Pinon City in Montana. Plot is based partly on an outbreak of Northern Cheyenne fomented by greedy cattlemen. In Senator Brisbane the settlers have a powerful ally, but one not quite powerful enough to defeat Captain Curtis who goes to Washington to defend the remnants of a once powerful tribe. With the better citizens regaining control, and the lawless frontiersmen being forced to leave, a new day dawns for the Indians. Captain Curtis, who in reality is the author's mouthpiece, supervises and encourages the transformation and evolution of the tribe from hunting to harvesting. For Garland believed, that by making the red race a strand in the woof of our national life, the Indian problem could be solved.

. . . "Some of you are sad," said Captain Curtis, "for you long for the old things- the big, broad plain, the elk, and the buffalo. So do I. I loved these things also. But you have seen how it is. The water of the stream never turns back to the spring, the old man never grows



Germany, had taught school near the child's camp and had often  
 entertained him. Two detailed and intimate glimpses were given  
 by Thomas, assistant of the Indian and leader of "the silent  
 hunters", which will be of great value. The story entitled "The  
 Silent Hunters" is the story of Thomas's life and death as  
 narrated by one of his friends.

Chapter at the Gray House is written with a strong  
 local purpose in view. Under the cloak of love and adventure  
 on a western reservation lies a protest of America's neglect  
 of the Indian. On the occasion of a Native American  
 festival Major George Curtis is introduced. He is  
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 author's mind, is a noble, generous and endearing the unrelenting  
 and the devotion of the tribe from morning to evening.  
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 the world of our national life, the Indian problem would be  
 solved.

"Some of you are and," said Captain Curtis, "for  
 you look for the old Indian - the old, proud, brave, the old  
 and the white. So do I. I loved them more than  
 but you have seen how it is. The water of the stream  
 never turns back to the spring, the old man never grows



young, the tree that falls does not rise up again. We have always to look ahead. Perhaps, in the happy hunting-ground all will be different, but here now we must do our best to live upon the earth. It is the law that, now the game being gone, we must plough and sow and reap the fruit of the soil. That is the meaning of all we have done to-day. We have put away the rifle; we here take up the hoe."<sup>14</sup>

The Book of the American Indian depicts the Indian's troubled attempts to walk the white man's road. Fourteen short stories give glimpses of various tribes whose members are confronted with new conditions to which they react in their own individual ways. The irresistible logic of Henry Wilson, the old settler in the story of Drifting Crane, convinces Chief Drifting Crane that the Indians fight a hopeless battle trying to hold back the westward movement of the pioneers. The Navajo in Big Moggasen refuses to depart from the ways of his fathers and send his child to school, even at the price of not receiving help. From the very start the new little hospital at the Rosebud Reservation had been taboo among the tribe pictured in The New Medicine House, and nothing would induce Robert's parents to let the boy remain at the hospital where he had been taken when stricken with pneumonia. As soon as they found out he was there they hastened to the hospital to bring him home to their own camp.

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14

Hamlin Garland, The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1902), pp.413-414.

...the first that falls does not rise up again. We  
have always to look ahead. Tomorrow, in the busy hour-  
day, we shall all be different, but here now we must go  
on best to live upon the earth. It is the law that now  
the game being told, we must think and now and now the  
truth of the world. What is the story of all we have  
done today. We have had many the night; we have taken up  
the night. It

The Book of the American Indian by the Indian's

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settler in the story of Indian Days, sometimes called Indian  
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the boy remain at the hospital where he had been taken when  
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they hastened to the hospital to bring him home to their own



Edwin Corle

People On The Earth is Edwin Corle's third book about the American Indian. Mojave, a collection of short stories with scenes laid around the Mojave Desert, appeared in 1934. The novel, Fig Tree John, tells the story of Agocho, a White River Apache who scorned reservation life, left his tribe and journeyed westward from Arizona in 1906. Choosing to live apart, he settled in an isolated spot near the Salton Sea. People On The Earth, with its background of primitive and educated Navajos, government schools, missionaries, and white towns bordering the reservation, centers its interest in Red Wind's Son, a young Navajo who fails to make the adjustment to reservation life after being educated in the white man's school. Red Wind's story is the story of Laughing Boy, of Myron Begay, of Chal Windzer, of Archilde Leon, of any one of the many Indian youths who are equipped with an education and a number of ideas which disqualify them as Indians without making them into white men.

Red Wind's Son, renamed Walter Stratton by the preacher who brought him back to health after an attack of influenza, travels a long way along the white man's road. His letters sent to Mr. Stratton while he attended various government schools are a curious medley of Indian and American knowledge. His struggles, his wanderings after school is finished, his eventual return to his people, complete the novel. Tragedy would seem to be the only logical ending for a book like People On The Earth but,

people in the earth in Edwin Corrie's third book about the American Indian. Hojava, a collection of short stories with scenes laid around the Hojava Desert, appeared in 1934. The novel, Big Tree John, tells the story of Apache, a White River Apache who scorned reservation life, left his tribe and journeyed westward from Arizona in 1908. Choosing to live apart, he settled in an isolated spot near the Salton Sea. People on the Edge, with its background of primitive and adopted Navajo, government schools, missionaries, and white towns bordering the reservation, centers its interest in Red Wind's son, a young Navajo who fails to make the adjustment to reservation life after being educated in the white man's school. Red Wind's story is the story of Laughing Boy, of Kiron Begay, of Chai Whistler, of Archie Lee, of any one of the many Indian youths who are equipped with an education and a number of ideas which disqualify them as Indians without making them into white men.

Red Wind's son, renamed Walter Straton by the preacher who brought him back to health after an attack of influenza, travels a long way along the white man's road. His letters sent to Mr. Straton while he attended various government schools are a curious medley of Indian and American knowledge. His struggles, his wanderings after school is finished, his eventual return to his people, complete the novel. Truly worth a read to be the only logical ending for a book like People on the Edge but,



while the reader is waiting for that tragic note, Mr. Corle sentimentalizes the plot and substitutes melodrama instead. After murdering Finley, Walter carries the body out to the reservation, buries it, and then begins life anew with Dahiba. People On The Earth leaves the reader with a sense of the hopelessness of ever trying to make anything out of an Indian except an Indian with a tendency to return to primitive habits.

Edwin Corle was born in New Jersey, in 1906, and moved to California when a young boy. After attending Yale he returned to the Southwest. His book, Desert Country (1941), a study of the desert land of the Southwest, is the first of the series of American Folkway Books written under the editorship of Erskine Caldwell. Mr. Corle knows the Southwest intimately, having spent considerable time visiting every corner of it, gathering facts and legends concerning the various Indian tribes and the early white settlers. John Mathews and Oliver La Farge are high in their praise of Corle's writings on the modern reservation Indian.

#### Frances Campbell Sparhawk

Frances Sparhawk, daughter of John Greenleaf Whittier's physician, was born in Amesbury and spent the greater part of her life in Brookline and Newton, Massachusetts. She received her education in private schools, graduating from the Ipswich Female Seminary in 1867. Her participation in the Indian Cause began in a modest manner. She obtained a list of schools founded for Indians, and made appeals for the establishment of reading-rooms

While the reader is waiting for the next chapter, Mr. Davis has  
 translated the first and published volume of his series.  
 In the first, which covers the body of the book, Mr. Davis has  
 written a very interesting and useful book. It is a book of the  
 early days of the nation with a chapter on the development of our  
 trying to make something out of an Indian society as Indian with a  
 tendency to return to primitive habits.

Edwin Davis was born in New Jersey, in 1905, and moved to  
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 early white settlers. John Henshaw and Oliver La Grange are high  
 in their praise of Davis's writings on the desert reservation  
 Indian.

#### Frances S. Gannett

Frances S. Gannett, daughter of John Gannett, author of  
 "Physiology," was born in Newbury and spent the greater part of  
 her life in Newbury and Newbury, Massachusetts. She received  
 her education in private schools, graduating from the Lowell  
 High School in 1907. Her participation in the Indian Game in  
 New in a recent manner. She obtained a list of schools founded  
 for Indians, and made plans for the establishment of a school  
 for Indians.



at these schools and at reservations. Having begun as an individual reformer, she later joined forces with organizations dedicated to Indian Reform. Miss Sparhawk served as chairman of the Indian library department of the Women's National Indian Association, the first of the many prominent Indian organizations, and as secretary of the Indian Industries League.

Through her writings she endeavored to enlighten and arouse public opinion regarding the Indians' ill-treatment. Her labors were aimed toward (1) educational reform, (2) equal opportunities for Indian children with other American children, (3) citizenship for the Indian, (4) abolishment of the "Spoils System".

A Chronicle Of Conquest was dedicated to her mother, "who from the time of the Nez Perce' War and the plea of Chief Joseph questioned why the Indians were kept in Reservations".<sup>15</sup> In her introduction to Onoqua she set forth her own resentment of the Reservation System:

How long are Indians, the true Americans, to wait for that blessing that comes at once to all foreigners who touch our shores,-- the inspiration of American laws? How long are we to hold them back from our opportunities, which every other individual may grasp wherever he can find them? How long are arid acres, which they have no means to irrigate, to be considered the sole requisite of these people for civilization and citizenship? In a





land full of arts and manufactures, how long is the cordon of the reservation, like the Libby death line, to imprison this race, full of mechanical and artistic skill? 16

An Ex-Superintendent of Indian Schools, Rev. Daniel Dorchester, D.D., made this comment on Onoqua:

. . . It is very true to Indian life and to scenes with which I am familiar. It effectively portrays the struggles which students returning from Eastern schools encounter in their reservation homes; few can realize the severity of the contest, and how little can be done to help them. Many students are genuine martyrs to Indian progress. 17

A Chronicle of Conquest tells the story of life at the Carlisle Indian School. This school was originally an old army post which the War Department turned over to be used as a school for Indians. It operated from 1879, when eighty-two young Indians arrived from the Sioux reservation, until its close in 1918. In A Chronicle of Conquest Miss Sparhawk has given an idealistic treatment of the subject of Indian education. All the Indians educated in the white man's schools make good, and none fall short of their white friends' fondest dreams. Carlisle School, as Miss Sparhawk pictures it, is an educator's Utopia. Model teachers, model pupils, perfect results- the picture is too perfect.

Senator Intrigue And Inspector Noseby pointed its barrage

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16

Frances C. Sparhawk, Onoqua (Boston: Lee & Shephard, 1892), Intro. p.iii.

17

Frances C. Sparhawk, Senator Intrigue And Inspector Noseby (Boston: Red-Letter Publishing Co., 1895), Supplementary Section at back of book.



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A Chronicle of Gagnon Miss Gagnon has given an idealistic treatment of the subject of Indian education. All the Indians educated in the white man's schools were good, and none bad; short of their white friends' fondest dreams. Carlisle School, as Miss Gagnon pictures it, is an educator's Utopia. Model teachers, model pupils, perfect results - the picture is too perfect.

Senator Ingham and Inspector Hootch pointed its damage

16

Thomas G. Gagnon, Gagnon (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1892), Intro. p. 111.

17

Thomas G. Gagnon, Senator Ingham and Inspector Hootch (Boston: Lee & Shepard Publishing Co., 1892), introduction, section at back of book.



of criticism at the evils of the "Spoils System". All honest men were urged to unite against a system in which political leaders were allowed to appoint to the Indian Service those whose self-aggrandizement wrought mischief and disaster for the nation's wards.

### Mary Holland Kinkaid

Like Cimarron, Sundown and Wah'Kon-Tah, The Man Of Yesterday: A Romance Of A Vanishing Race is a story of Oklahoma. This novel by Mary Holland Kinkaid deals with conditions among the Chickasaws and Choctaws in the Indian Territory during the last decade of the nineteenth century, the period when tribal rule was coming to an end and Oklahoma was not far away from statehood. Through the hero, The Man Looking For The Sun, Mrs. Kinkaid has voiced her desire to right his people's wrongs. Her novel has shed light on (1) the manner in which land-grabbers and syndicates preyed upon the Indian, continually reducing his allotment through tricky means, (2) the political and social complications existing in a mixed population together with the effects of that conflict upon the red race. Plot concerns itself with the romance of Hattokowa, a full-blood, and Pakali, a half-breed trained by whites. Arnold Stuart, a Government man, steps in and wins Pakali, only to desert her later. For this Hattokowa wreaks vengeance upon his former rival, following the act with dramatic atonement later.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to examine this novel. The publisher has declared it to be out of print, and a

of existing at the crisis of the "Spotted System". All honest men were urged to unite against a system in which political leaders were allowed to appeal to the Indian Service those whose self-aggrandizement brought mischievous and disaster for the nation's welfare.

Walter H. Hixson

Like Waverley, Hixson and Waverley, the Man of the West  
day: a Romance of a Frontier is a story of Oklahoma. This novel by Walter Hixson deals with conditions among the Chickasaws and Choctaws in the Indian Territory during the last decade of the nineteenth century, the period when tribal rule was coming to an end and Oklahoma was not far away from statehood. Through the hero, the Man Looking for the Sun, Hixson tells how he voiced her desire to fight his people's wrongs. The novel has shed light on (1) the manner in which land-grabbers and speculators preyed upon the Indian; continually revealing his alignment through tricky means, (2) the political and social complications existing in a mixed population together with the effects of that conflict upon the red race. It is a novel itself with the romance of Hixson's, a full-blooded, and Pearly, a half-breed created by Hixson. Arnold Stewart, a Government man, stage in and with Pearly, only to desert her later. For this Hixson knew what vengeance upon his former rival, following the act with dramatic statement later.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to ascertain this novel. The publisher has declined it to be out of print, and a



thorough search of book stores and libraries, both public and private, has not yielded a single copy.

George Frederick Miller (pseudonym, William H. Patterson)

A Wild Indian, published anonymously in 1942, gives an authentic picture of life on a reservation during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Unlike the earlier novels which abounded in sentimentalism, exaggeration and over-statement, this author has aimed toward a realistic presentation. The story is that of a young man from the East who went out, at the turn of the century, to teach the Indian children and help civilize their parents at the isolated Fort Reed Reservation on the Missouri River. Henry Velt had only intended to remain one year, but became bound to the place by numerous ties, and gave the best years of his life to the Service.

The novel is the result of the author's long and intimate acquaintance with the Indian Service. George F. Miller lived the book before he wrote it. His pictures of the educational phase of reservation life are exceptionally good, due, no doubt, to the fact that, as Supervisor of Indian Schools, he spent considerable time at Indian Schools from North Carolina to California, giving him an opportunity to acquire a view of the whole field.

The author grows satirical in his denunciation of bureaucratic Washington, two thousand miles away, but making its presence felt at all times. He is sincere in his admiration of the better type of reservation agent who does a good job, despite

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the fact that he is weighted down under a system of red-tape, circular orders and laws drawn up by theorists who little understand the problems of the Field Service.

### Gwendolen Overton

The valiant and incalculable Apaches, notorious in white men's historical accounts, found in Gwendolen Overton someone who saw their side of the struggle. Her novel, The Heritage Of Unrest, is a study of the relations between the Apaches in New Mexico and Arizona with the United States Government during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Miss Overton was born at an Army Post on the Plains, and was thoroughly acquainted with the people and the environment of which she wrote.

Unsparing in her condemnation of the government's blundering, dishonorable treatment of its wards, Miss Overton heaps the greatest blame on the heads of reservation agents. Their greed, thievery, oppression and goading, she believes, were responsible for the uprisings of the Apaches grown bitter and resentful toward a government which had cheated them.

Like Hamlin Garland, Miss Overton is high in her praise of the United States Army. Her admiration for the way in which they settled the Apache question is expressed in the following quotation:

The Indian wars of the southwest have been made a very small side issue in our history. The men who have carried them on have gained little glory and little

the fact that he is weighted down under a system of red-tape, almost entirely and laid down by specialists who little understand the problems of the field service.

### Unpopular Overton

The valiant and idealistic speeches, notorious in white man's historical writings, found in Unpopular Overton someone who saw both sides of the struggle. Her novel, The Heritage of the West, is a study of the relations between the Indians in New Mexico and Arizona with the United States Government during the last few years of the nineteenth century. Miss Overton was born in an army post on the Plains, and was thoroughly acquainted with the people and the environment of which she wrote.

Unpopular in her condemnation of the government's policy, dishonest, dishonest treatment of the words, Miss Overton brings the greatest blame on the heads of reservation agents. Their greed, thievery, oppression and gouging, she believes, were responsible for the bitterness of the Apaches grown bitter and revengeful toward a government which had cheated them.

Miss Maria Garland, Miss Overton is high in her praise of the United States Army. Her admiration for the way in which they settled the Apache question is expressed in the following

testimony:

The Indian wars of the southwest have been made a very real and noble issue in our history. The men who have carried them on have gained little glory and little



fame. And yet they have accomplished a big task, and accomplished it well. 18

Hamlin Garland believed that replacement of agency superintendents by Army officers would result in much more efficient reservation management. Miss Overton shared this belief. When the Army returned victorious, after subduing a band of Apaches who had gone on the war-path, she predicted:

. . . There would be peace; the San Carlos Agency, breeding-grounds of all ills, would be turned over to military supervision. The general would have power to give his promise to the Apaches and to see that it was kept. The experiment of honesty and of giving the devil his due would have a fair trial. 19

To return to the opening quotation of this thesis: "The North American Indian was first the friend, then the enemy, and is now the philanthropic rag-doll of the American people".<sup>20</sup> The Indian of the first stage, "the friend of the American people", appeared in American literature as the romanticist's idealized savage. Many of these characters bear as little resemblance to the original as the tobacco-store brave to a live Indian. The red man of the second stage, "the enemy of the

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18

Gwendolen Overton, The Heritage of Unrest (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903), p. 230.

19

Ibid., p. 244.

20

Price Collier, Mr. Picket-Pin And His Friends (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Company, 1894), p. 1.

There are two main ways of doing this, and as-  
sumed to be well. It

As the writer believed that the management of agency appointments  
was by far the most important result in such a situation, the  
writer arranged. This writer shared this belief. When the  
writer believed that, after making a study of agencies who  
had gone on the war-path, the writer:

There would be peace; the San Carlos Agency  
arranging friends of all this, would be turned over to  
agency supervision. The general would have power to  
give the promise to the Agency and to see that it was  
kept. The experiment of how far of giving the power  
the one would have a fair trial. It

To return to the opening question of this thesis: "The  
Social Revolution in India was first the friend, then the enemy, and  
is now the philistine's rag-doll of the American people."  
The Indian of the first stage, "the friend of the American pro-  
prietor," appeared in American literature as the romanticist's  
idealized savage. Any of these characters bear a little re-  
semblance to the first thing as the Indian-state moves to a live  
Indian. The end was at the second stage, "the enemy of the

18  
Swamiji's letter, The Heritage of Bharatavarzi, New York: The  
Macmillan Company, 1902, p. 130.

19  
Ibid., p. 144.

20  
W. G. O'Brien, Mr. Gandhi and His Friends (London:  
The Macmillan Company, 1921), p. 1.



American people", has been viewed in a most unflattering light, as a treacherous, fiendish and depraved "red varmint" whose well-deserved fate was biting the dust. These savages were murdered and scalped anew by writers who placed their emphasis upon Indian cruelties. Indian ideals of silence, courage and endurance were transcribed into taciturnity, cruelty and barbarism under the pens of these writers. In contrast to those picturing the first two stages, writers who have dealt with the latest phase, the reservation era, are concerned with the question of the Indian's rights as a human being and citizen. They have been imbued with a desire to express truth, to portray the red man as an individual entitled to share equally with fellow white Americans in the fruits of an American democracy.





### CHAPTER III

#### FOUR PHASES OF RESERVATION LIFE EDUCATIONAL, RELIGIOUS, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL

If the novelists wished to speak for the reservation Indian, if they hoped by their writing to send forth a plea for the betterment of his lot, then they must present a picture of circumstances under which he existed at the time of their writing. Some did exaggerate and enlarge upon the misery and hardships, but the majority reported accurately on the conditions of the particular reservations on which they focused their attention. Whether they wrote of the northwestern reservations or those in the southwest the "Indian Problem" was the same. Concentration upon reservations had brought defeat, economic and political defeat for the Indian. The de-Indianization process robbed him of his religion and the failure of the government to provide an adequate system of education made it impossible for him to improve his lot. The manner in which the novelists describe the educational, religious, economic and political phases of reservation life have been set forth in this section.

#### The Educational Phase

Until 1929 the main purpose of Indian education was to make the children turn completely away from all things Indian, Indian arts and crafts were discouraged, and any manifestations





of Indian culture were frowned upon. Indian children were taught:

. . . You must not listen to the old men. 'Blanket Indians were dirty, ignorant, shameful. Indian art was crude and odd, Indian ways were backward, you must not want to learn from your mother. Your legends, the long history of your tribe, the undefeated, the great warrior nations of Sioux, Apache, Navajo, Blackfeet, Seminole, and the ancient culture of the peaceful Pueblos, all are contemptible. Wipe them from your mind. It's too bad you're an Indian, but at least you can come pretty near being like us. 1

Indian children could become "educated" by going to the school on the reservation, either mission school or government, or by being sent off to an eastern school. Government boarding-schools were in the majority. Children were allowed to return home only during the summer months, sometimes not even for that short period. For many, enrollment in school meant not returning to the reservation for a period of from five to ten years. Oliver La Farge explains why some pupils did not leave Tsaili Boarding School during the summer months:

About fifty youngsters would stay at the school that year. The parents of some lived too hopelessly far away to come and get them, of others, particularly younger children, the school did not know where their hogahns were, or through carelessness failed to notify their people, who in turn did not know that their children could be reclaimed. 2

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1

Oliver La Farge, As Long As The Grass Shall Grow (New York: Longmans Green & Co., 1940), pp. 16-17.

2

Oliver La Farge, The Enemy Gods (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937), p.21.





Indian parents wanted no part of the white man's education for any of their children. Contrary to Frances Sparhawk's presentation in Onoqua and A Chronicle of Conquest in which she would have us believe that little Onoqua and Faith Red Heart pleaded to be allowed to go to school, parents and children alike had a horror of attending the white man's schools. And small wonder. There was nothing attractive or inviting about any of them. Miserable housing, inadequate food, over-work, military routine and degrading punishments turned schools into penitentiaries.

The novelists have depicted the "snatching away" process in graphic fashion. Little Mike and Narce of The Surrounded would have given anything to be able to continue their hunting and fishing and to listen to their grandmother's stories, but autumn had arrived and they must go to school.

To get them to school, they had first to be captured. There were no preparations, no buying of clothes, and no talk about what was coming. If they had suspected anything they would have disappeared like scared rabbits and there would be no finding them again. The many tepees of their grandmother's family were widely scattered, and any one of them would provide shelter; or they might hide in the mountains like horse thieves. 3

Mrs. Hartley made the mistake of telling Thunder Woman ahead of time that she was coming out on the mesa in a week or two to get the children. Thunder Woman's family moved the very next day,

Indian parents wanted to put of the white man's education  
for any of their children. Contrary to Brown's statement's  
statement in regard to a Christian of Congress in which she  
would have no belief that little Brown was with her heart  
gladly to be allowed to go to school, parents and children  
were not of attending the white man's schools. And  
small wonder. There was nothing attractive or tempting about  
any of them. Miserable huts, inadequate food, over-work,  
illiteracy and degrading position of the school's  
condition.

The revolution had destroyed the "uneducated way" process  
in the Indian. Little like and name of the uneducated  
would have given anything to be able to continue their learning  
and thinking and to listen to their grandfather's stories, but  
nothing had arisen and they went to school.

To get them to school, they had first to be captured.  
There were no pretensions, no buying of clothes, and  
no talk about what was coming. If they had suspected  
anything they would have disappeared like scared rabbits.  
But there was no finding them again. The only  
kind of their grandfather's family were wholly forgotten,  
and any one of them would provide shelter or help  
at the time in the morning like some thieves.

Mr. Hester with the mistake of telling Thomas Brown about  
the fact that was coming out on the road in a week or two to get  
the children. Thomas Brown's family moved the very next day.



leaving no trace of their whereabouts. "Mrs. Hartley, you'll never get that family within fifty miles of Tuba City again," said Stratton. "Education has to begin with subtlety," he added.<sup>4</sup> Agent Long gave orders to Principal White to go out and gather in his flock in these words:

It's time then to begin gettin' the children in. You know what trouble we had last year gettin' them into school. You and Velt take the spring wagon and the team of bays, and go to Deer Creek for a bunch today. Pick up Enoch Lane-Horse for an interpreter when you get there. Now don't let the children slip through your fingers. Tell 'em its orders from Washington. 5

The first few days at school separated the young Indian from his old way of life. Given a new name, new clothes, and made to live in a white man's structure marked the end of his old freedom. Myron Begay's reactions were typical of all beginning students:

Events had been bewildering since the boy found himself in the crowded truck jouncing over the ungraded road. The bewilderment increased progressively in rate . . . Under a variety of hands, along with other children some of whom wept, some struggled, some were stolid, he passed through swift and astounding treatments. . . He was held, his hair cut, shorn like a sheep, he was stripped, scrubbed, deloused . . .

. . . His sacred hair, worn as Spider Woman taught them, was gone . . . He stood staring at the great mesa which made almost the whole western horizon, remembering the men holding his mother, his father facing a rifle. She cried out and fought, but just as terrible was the

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<sup>4</sup> Edwin Corle, People On The Earth (New York: Random House, 1937), p.128.

<sup>5</sup> George F. Miller, A Wild Indian (Washington: Daylison Co., 1942), p.22



leaving no trace of their whereabouts. Mrs. Bartlett, you'll

never get that feeling of being miles of town away again."

said Bartlett. "Knoxton has no better with subject," he

added. "Agent Jones came to the principal White to go out and

gather in his flock in these words:

"It's time to begin getting the children in. You know what friends we had last year getting them into school. You and I took the spring wagon and the team of boys, and go to look for a woman today. Pick up Knox Jones-Horse for an hour or so when you get there. Now don't let the children slip through your fingers. Tell 'em the orders from Washington."

The first few days at school separated the young Indian

from his old way of life. Given a new name, new clothes, and

made to live in a white man's atmosphere marked the end of his

old freedom. Byron Berry's reactions were typical of all be-

coming students:

"I've had been bewildering since the boy found his- self in the crowded truck jammed over the ungraded road. The bewildering increased progressively in rate. Under a variety of names, along with other children some of whom were, some were not, some were white, he passed through white and colored settlements. . . he was held, his hair cut, given like a sheep, he was stripped, scrubbed, deloused. . .

. . . His sacred hair, worn as Spider Woman taught them, was gone. . . He stood staring at the great mass which was almost the whole western horizon, remembering the man holding his mother, his father taking a rifle. She cried out and fought, but just as terrible was the

1937, p. 124. Spencer, George, People on the Earth (New York: Random House).

George F. Miller, A Wild Indian (Washington: Boyton Co., 1942), p. 22.



way he stood helpless, and the look on his face . . . He fought the tears. They were rough with mother. Out of the welter of feelings hatred slowly came to the top.<sup>6</sup>

Many of the new teachers came to the reservation feeling somewhat like missionaries. "Ah, to teach little Indian minds," said Miss Hoover. "To see them open like flowers on their own beautiful prairie."<sup>7</sup> But after the first few months ninety-nine per cent of the teachers became disillusioned, and sank into the lethargy common to all Indian schools. Miss Hoover's first day of school has a touch of the humorous in it: She breezed into classroom, introducing herself in the following fashion:

"Well, here we are." She seemed to be baffled by the total lack of response in the expressionless faces, but she kept smiling. She backed up to the desk and put her hands behind her. "Well," she repeated, "now we shall get started, sha'n't we?" She stood thus for some moments, then emotion seemed to grip her; her face became even brighter, and her eyes sparkled with enthusiasm. She stood on her toes and seemed heightened by some bubbling force within; she almost rocked, "Now, we shall start from the beginning- and learn English. Then we shall come to know and understand each other. I am sure that I shall learn to love each one of you, and I hope you will return my love. For my part, I am the daughter of an eastern merchant whose forefathers were greeted by yours at Plymouth Rock, and we have come together on this lovely fall day to understand each other, haven't we?" She had an uncomfortable feeling that she was addressing the wooden benches. "How many of you speak English?" raising her hand. No response, no light in a single face. The light seemed to die gradually from her face, though she continued to smile. A series of painful disturbances went through her brain like a slight waves . . . <sup>8</sup>

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6

Oliver La Farge, The Enemy Gods pp. 8 ff.

7

John Mathews, Sundown p. 26.

8

Ibid., pp. 25-26.







On the first day at the Fort Reed Boarding School Henry Velt fared no better than Miss Hoover had on hers. In his book on pedagogy he had read of the power of a song in beginning the day's work. With self-confidence he faced his first class:

"I'm sure that all of you know My Country 'Tis of Thee. Perhaps you are a little rusty on the words or tune . . . Now all start together on the count of three. One two, 'My country 'tis of thee," sang the teacher alone. No pupil opened his mouth. None smiled. Not a one moved a facial muscle. They gazed straight ahead- thirty bronze images.<sup>9</sup>

Miss Heath could provide an explanation of the students' conduct:

I know, Mr. Velt, how you felt. I had the same trouble when I came here a year ago. In the first place the children didn't understand English, and, of course, I couldn't speak their language . . .

They also thought of me at first as their enemy. They learned from their parents, no doubt, that whites were their enemies. As long as they felt that way, they resisted all the teaching I could do. <sup>10</sup>

English was taught from the early days of Indian schools, and is still being taught in the Indian schools of today. Six-year-olds were exposed to this "foreign" language, their readers being exactly the same as those used by all other American children in public schools throughout the country. Indian children were expected to understand stories centering around people and customs entirely strange to them. Today their books are built around centers of interest familiar to the Indian child and within his own experiences.

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9

George Miller, A Wild Indian pp. 37-38.

10

Ibid., pp.44-45.





With the enormous amount of industrial work given the pupils it is a wonder they ever had time to do any actual school work. George Miller has presented a very good picture of work required of boarding school pupils:

. . . The girls made much of the clothing for the boys and mended two hundred pairs of stockings and the same number of socks. They mended dresses, shirts, trousers, underwear and bedclothes. With the help of a cook and assistant, the girls did the cooking and baking and washed the dishes for two hundred pupils. Under the direction of Mrs. Tiller, the laundress, they washed and ironed the clothes and bedding for two hundred pupils. They swept floors, dusted furniture, cleaned and filled lamps, and made their own beds.

. . . All except the youngest spent only half days in the class-rooms. The other half they worked. No, that did not mean that teachers were in the classroom only half days. Pupils were divided into two sections. One worked in the mornings and the other was in classrooms. In the afternoon they exchanged places.

Oh, yes, the boys worked half days also. They hauled barrels of water in a wagon from the River, carried coal to the hundred stoves and carried ashes away, stoked the fires, milked and fed cows, helped put up ice in cold weather and distributed it to iceboxes in warm, did stable work, and the like. 11

Sleeping in a boarding school dormitory was a far cry from rolling into a blanket and lying on sheep skins, outside the hogan, a clear blue sky overhead. Mr. La Farge describes a typical dormitory:

In the dormitory were seventy-five beds for a total of ninety boys. The iron frames, in need of paint and with springs sagging, stood in rank on rank, twelve inches apart. On a rail at the foot of each, its occupant hung his clothes. Two enormous stoves, empty now, loomed in the room for winter heating, the floor around them and from them to the door was smudged black with







coal dust and ashes. From time to time a few new beds or new mattresses were secured to replace the most completely ruined, the rest continued in service like lame soldiers.

Myron stared with deep depression at this great, homeless cavern and the unending iron frames and dark, army blankets. <sup>12</sup>

Disciplinarians saw to it that rules were obeyed. Punishments were stiff but they did not stop the children from trying to escape. Running away was chronic. Who could blame the youngsters from trying to escape the dull suffering and unending drabness of school life? Jack, of The Enemy Gods, was captured and made to dress in girls' clothing for the rest of the term. <sup>13</sup> Not a few of the pupils shared the fate of little Paul Red-Fox who ran off in a blizzard, his frozen body found in the melting snow of the next spring. <sup>14</sup>

"Backsliding" is the term used to describe Indians who have been exposed to white man's culture but revert to the old Indian way of life because conditions on the reservation prevent their living according to white standards. Little Myron Begay learned the meaning of the term while still at school. Despite the strict watch kept by the Matron who was taking the place of the Disciplinarian away on leave, two of the older pupils managed to slip out of the dormitory at night to attend a tribal function. Myron watched them, confused thoughts running through his mind:

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<sup>12</sup>

Oliver La Farge, The Enemy Gods pp. 14-15.

<sup>13</sup>

Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>14</sup>

George F. Miller, A Wild Indian p. 107.





When he relaxed from the excitement of watching them slip out, Myron's feelings swung into an entirely new course. They were doing a wicked thing, risking unimaginable punishment. He had recently learned the word backslide. To be born an Indian and live and die and worship like one was bad enough; to learn better and backslide was infinitely worse. Mr. Bucla had been very emphatic on the subject. Now he knew what it meant, the motion of the boys as they went over the window sills was so visibly backsliding. That was what the Indians wanted to make people do. Another phrase, understood vaguely as "he then sermons". The songs and dancing out there were a "then sermon". One ought not to like it. The cheerful tune sounded suddenly mocking. The figure of Roan Horse, of his mother. He buried his head under the pillow. 15

Archilde Leon became the target of his white father's sarcasm when he reverted to his Indian mother's way of life. Max, looking at his son decked out in Indian dress said:

"So you've joined the tribe again, eh?"

Archilde looked back. "We're going fishing."

"Yeh, next week you'll be back to the blanket!"

"Well, what about it?" He matched his father's contempt with a tone of challenge, but the tone was weaker than he intended. He could not quite equal his father's contempt.

"You'll make a good Indian!" Max heaped it on and ended by scowling. 16

To continue to wear the school uniform was a sign that the student was continuing his struggle to live according to white standards; casting it aside meant a reversion to "the blanket". A few returned students, Ahsaniak in Onoqua, - for example, made a desperate effort to carry on:

It was a tribute to the power of the influence to

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15

Oliver La Farge, The Enemy Gods p. 43.

16

D'Arcy McNickle, The Surrounded pp. 24-25.







which she had been subjected that, for all these two years, she had kept on doing as far as she could the domestic duties that she had learned at school. She still wore the school dress . . . 17

The majority, however, soon fell back into the ways of their parents.

Under Commissioner Rhoads, in 1929, the spade-work for educational reform began. Changes were made throughout the whole school system. Food and housing appropriations were greatly increased. "We've got our new food appropriation," said Doctor Entwistle, the Director of Education. "Thirty-six cents per child per day; not as much as we would have like, but at least it's as good as the army gets," he added. <sup>18</sup> Civil Service requirements for personnel were revised. Regarding this reform Doctor Entwistle says:

. . . We can't do much until we elevate our personnel, you know. We hope to get all the educational positions reclassified, with stiffer requirements and increased pay, as soon as we can persuade the Bureau of the Budget. 19

For the first time steps were taken toward the correlation of instruction in school and the problems which the Indians must face on their own reservations. From 1871, the beginning of the reservation era, to 1929, Indian Education placed emphasis on vocational trades training and leaving the reservation for outside employment. Students were fitted to go into industrial work and become assimilated in American city life. But the ma-

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17

Frances Sparhawk, Onoqua p. 35.

18

Oliver La Farge, The Enemy Gods p. 99.

19

Ibid., p. 97.





majority of students did not chose to remain outside the reservation.<sup>20</sup> Surveys have proven there were very few who did not go back to their reservations after school was finished.

All the reservation novels which touch upon the subject of Indian education deal with education as it was before reform had taken place. None have been written on the period following 1929, the period in which emphasis has been placed on the preparation of the Indian child for successful living on the reservation. The lack of correlation which existed between instruction given in school and the problems of reservation life accounts for the fact that so many of the novels have, for their heroes and heroines, maladjusted returned students unable to carry out the ideas gained in the white man's schools. Simon Blackhawk had learned the plumber's trade at Carlisle, but how could he apply his knowledge when "there were no iron pipes to screw together within fifty miles of Fort Reed"?<sup>21</sup> Slim Girl, in the novel, Laughing Boy, Myron Begay of The Enemy Gods, Chal Windzer of Sundown, Archilde Leon of The Surrounded, Red Wind's Son, in People On The Earth, Capea and Natalie Osandiah of A Chronicle of Conquest, Onoqua in the story of that name-- all are fashioned from the same pattern. Edwin Corle's comments

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Surveys conducted by the Educational Division of the Office of Indians Affairs. (Oliver La Farge, The Changing Indian Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), p. 123.

21

George Miller, A Wild Indian p. 257.





on Red Wind's Son apply to all the others:

. . . Here was a school Indian who had an education that was no earthly good to him . . . It proved the uselessness of education to Tso's complete satisfaction and he was glad he had withdrawn his youngest daughter from the day school in the canyon. She had learned white ways there for two years and now that she was becoming mature it was time to stop that foolishness. Look at this boy called Walter- Tso wouldn't want any of his children to turn out to be a misfit like that. 22

Today more money is being spent for education than for any other item on the budget of the Office of Indian Affairs. Children living near public school attend school there. Federal Indian Schools have been built for several thousand children who live too far from regular public schools. There are still a few boarding schools in existence. Vocational high schools teach scientific use of land and skilled trades. The school now serves as a community center, helping to bring the family closer together. Parents come for help in community projects and special class instruction. This is a far cry from the old days when children were snatched away at an early age, sent off to school only to return years later, strangers to their families and the old way of life.

### The Religious Phase

If the red men were to be completely "de-Indianized" their religion must be suppressed, decided the white men who had corralled them into the reservations. Indian ceremonies, rituals, and dances were discouraged, and even regarded as offenses to be







punished by imprisonment. Indian children entering school were required to attend Christian religious meetings and were given instruction in some one of the Christian religions, whether the parents desired it or not.

Certain features of the white man's religion puzzled the Indians. They saw nothing strange in the idea that Christianity contained so many different "varieties", Quaker, Morman, Episcopal, Catholic, Methodist, etc., because they had so many cults of their own, but why was there such hatred among the various groups? Why was it that you could only join one sect at a time, and must turn your back completely on all other sects when you joined one? Why was there such friction and rivalry among the Christian churches? When Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce was asked by the Commissioners whether or not his tribe wanted schools, he answered in the negative because he believed:

They will teach us to quarrel about God, as the Catholics and Protestants do on the Nez Percé Reservation, and at other places . . . We may quarrel with men sometimes about things on this earth, but we never quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that. 23

Some reservations were given over entirely to one Christian sect, all others being excluded. This was so in the novel, Hidden Power. On others, two or more denominations worked in harmony, but more often at odds with each other. Usually, if





there were two or three different Churches, the school children were divided evenly among the number of sects represented on a particular reservation. At Tsaili, Mr. Butler and Father Joseph drew equal shares:

Uniformed and shorn alike, half were in his [Mr. Butler's] congregation, half in Father Joseph's, divided as they entered, even to the Black Coat, odd to the Dragging Robe. 24

White civilization is the villain of each reservation novel. The missionaries, because they are part of the intrusive white element, have been portrayed, in many instances, as narrow-minded, weak or stupid, in order to help the novelists gain their point. They wish to leave the impression that (1) white civilization had no right to force its ways upon the red, and (2) it has failed miserably in doing so. Christianity, as handed out to the Indian, is presented as being of a warped or perfunctory sort. Paganism, on the other hand, has been glorified and made most attractive. "Thick-set, bullet-headed" Brother Sebastian, "who looked as if he had large faith in the persuasiveness of fists",<sup>25</sup> saw nothing wrong in resorting to unfair methods in order to beat his rival, Mr. Thurston. Brother Ansel cautioned; "Remember only that as we are placed, I cannot escape the brunt of whatever blame your rashness may bring upon us."<sup>26</sup> When Red Wind's Son felt that Preacher Stratton had double-

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24

Oliver La Farge, The Enemy Gods p. 18.

25

Frances Sparhawk, Onoqua p. 8.

26

Ibid., pp. 9-10.





crossed him he mused:

. . . 'Kindly Man is kind but he isn't honest.' That was a long time ago. One of the People had said that and now he knew what it meant. There was a word for that and the word was cheat. There was a bigger word for it and that word was hypocrite. He could never really like Mr. Stratton again. He wasn't pure. He needed cleansing. 27

This same Mr. Stratton was defrocked later because of actions unbecoming to a minister.

Reservation Indians are a strange combination of pagan and Christian ways. They may attend Church, but they also cling to many of the old pagan practices. One Indian living in a modern home with up-to-date furnishings had a medicine-man's lodge tucked away, out of sight, up in his attic. An Indian interpreter, who officiated at pagan ceremonies on occasion, preached a Christian sermon, in the Church where he was a member, when it was discovered the pastor was too ill to preside. 28  
29  
Capea Osandiah had a Christian funeral because both he and his wife, Natalie, had been to Carlisle. The missionary conducted the services, but, in the room beyond, Natalie's family mourned in Indian fashion. As much as Natalie fought and told herself she was no longer Indian she had to admit:

. . . Her brother, her mother, her sister, were the strongest foes of the life she wished to live. No; the

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27

Edwin Corle, People On The Earth p. 270.

28

Clark Wissler, Indian Cavalcade p. 198.

29

Ibid., p. 191.

crossed the road:

... 'I don't like it, but he isn't honest.' That was a long time ago. One of the people had said that and now he knew what it meant. There was a word for that and the word was honest. There was a black word for it and that word was hypocrite. He didn't never really like it. He didn't like it. He wasn't sure. He wasn't honest. 27

This same Mr. Carpenter was followed later because of his

unpleasant to a minister.

Resurrection Indians and a strange combination of years and Christian ways. They say about Church, but they also like to any of the old pagan practices. The Indian living in a cabin home with up-to-date furniture had a medicine-man's lodge.

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He was out of sight up in the air. In Indian interpretation who collected at pagan ceremonies on occasion, preached a Chris-

tian service, in the Church where he was a member, when it was

29  
discussed the pastor was too ill to preside. One of the Indian

had a Christian service because he had his wife, Katalie,

and been to church. The missionary conducted the service,

but, in the end, Katalie's family moved to Indian land.

As soon as Katalie thought and told herself she was no longer

Indian she had to admit:

... Her mother, her mother, her sister, were the strongest ones of the life she wished to live. No; she

27  
Katalie Coxie, People on the North p. 170.

28  
Clark Katalie, Indian Service p. 198.

29  
Ibid., p. 181.



strongest was deep in her own heart- a sympathy with their superstitions that would not die, and that she feared, above all things, they would discover. 30

Sister Bridget of the Mission School found the children willing listeners who accepted the story of Christianity with open hearts. But Christianity never made the deep impression she had hoped it would make.

. . . They buried their dead under their cabins, removing enough of the puncheon floor to enable them to dig a grave, laying the timbers back neatly, and then deserting the cabins to live outdoors again, going back to the blanket at the same time and holding elaborate placating ceremonies to various gods of the elements. 31

Clark Wissler explains how the Indian made way for white men's concepts but held a reserved section of his mind ready to accommodate the ancient ways of his elders:

The young educated Indians, many of whom had been converted to Christianity, would vie with each other to tell me how foolish and silly they believed the medicine man to be, but not within his hearing, for in reality they respected and feared what he stood for. Should one of them be really ill, this same medicine man would be welcomed. This duplicity was one of the most obvious results of the Indian education of that day; perhaps not conscious duplicity, just a matter of building up a complex of white beliefs in one part of the Indian youth's personality without disturbing or displacing the other complex derived from his elders at home. And that ancient complex was the stronger in the end. 32

In the novels under investigation not one of the Indian

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Frances Sparhawk, A Chronicle of Conquest p. 229

31

Edna Ferber, Cimarron p. 43.

32

Clark Wissler, Indian Cavalcade p. 295.



strongest was born in her own heart - a sympathy with their  
superstitions that would not die, and that she feared,  
above all things, they would discover. 30

After Bishop of the Western School found the children willing  
listeners who accepted the story of Christianity with open  
hearts. But Christianity never made the deep impression she had  
hoped it would make.

They turned their hands upon their heads, re-  
peating over and over the words "I am a Christian" and then de-  
claring that they were Christians. They then de-  
claring the saying of the Western School, going back to  
the beginning of the world and holding themselves pre-  
sented themselves as true Christians. 31

Chief Justice explains how the Indian made way for white men's  
coming in but held a reserved section of his mind ready to accept  
the ancient ways of his elders:

The young educated Indians, many of whom had been edu-  
cated in Christianity, would not with each other to tell  
me how foolish and silly they believed the Indians were  
to be, but not within his hearing. For in reality they  
repeated and learned what he taught them. Should one of  
them be really ill, that same medicine man would be wel-  
comed. This reality was one of the most obvious re-  
sults of the Indian education of the day; perhaps not  
accidental. In fact, a matter of building up a com-  
plex of white beliefs in one part of the Indian world's  
complexity without disturbing or displacing the other  
complex derived from his elders as usual. And that ex-  
actly complex was the stronger in the end. 32

In the novel under investigation not one of the Indian

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- 30  
Thomas Spurgeon, A Chronicle of Goodness, p. 323  
31  
John Pether, Unsettled, p. 15.  
32  
John Pether, Unsettled, p. 323.



characters embracing Christianity has been entirely loyal to the new faith. The Indians who go to school take up "the Jesus Trail" because they have to, but invariably they "backslide" as soon as they return to the old way of life. As Myron Begay told himself, after he had made the decision to return to Navajo gods, "Then really and really I'm not Christian. I'm against that God. . . Pretending- no, I believed- but all wrong." <sup>33</sup>

Paganism is represented as having humaneness, beauty, poetry, and the power to impart mystical experience. Gods appear as real characters. The inclusion of a great amount of information on tribal mythology, customs and rituals adds much to the educational value of the novels. Fragments of the famous Navajo Chants add to their literary value. When Slim Girl dies, Laughing Boy chants:

With a place of hunger in me I wander,  
 Food will not fill it,  
 Aya-ah, beautiful.  
 With an empty place in me I wander,  
 Nothing will fill it,  
 Aya-ah, beautiful.  
 With a place of sorrow in me I wander,  
 Time will not end it,  
 Aya-ah, beautiful.  
 With a place of loneliness in me I wander,  
 No one will fill it,  
 Aya-ah, beautiful.  
 Forever alone, forever in sorrow I wander,  
 Forever empty, forever hungry I wander,  
 With the sorrow of great beauty I wander,  
 With the emptiness of great beauty I wander,  
 Never alone, never weeping, never empty,  
 Now on the old age trail, now on the path of beauty I  
 wander, <sup>34</sup>  
 Ahalani, beautiful!

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33

Oliver La Farge, The Enemy Gods p. 312

34

Oliver La Farge, Laughing Boy pp.297-298.

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...the ... of the ...

...the ... of the ...

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The medicine man was an important person, playing a prominent role in the religious life of his community. His most important function was to cure or cause illness, to combat and prevent death. His role of defender of the old way of life is summarized as follows:

. . . To the church-man he was the symbol of pagan iniquity, to the reformer he stood as the greatest obstacle, to the official he expressed the determined conservatism of pagan life, the self-appointed leader of the opposition.

. . . Often he was not politically minded, was not the leader the reservation agent supposed him to be, but was still a mighty power in defending the old views of life, and in one brief monologue, he could nullify 50 sermons by the missionary. 35

When Red Wind's family were stricken with influenza the medicine man, Sees Many People, made a thin line of sacred meal across the doorway of the hogan which always faced Johanoai, the sun. More meal was sprinkled at the other three points of the compass. But:

Quiet Woman and Short Hair would not be completely cured until they went to the long nine-day sing where many people would gather and the sick would be treated with great care and their illnesses would disappear into sand paintings that the medicine men would make for the gods. It took supreme skill to make a perfect sand painting. Then the gods would inspect the painting and the patients would sit or lie on it, and if the gods were pleased with artistry of the paintings all the sick person's illness would go into the sand painting and when the sand was scattered at sunset the illness would disappear. 36

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35

Clark Wissler, Indian Cavalcade pp. 294-295.

36

Oliver La Farge, People On The Earth pp. 64-65.





Today, under the new policy, the right of the Indians to their own ceremonials and traditions is respected and encouraged by the Government, and the medicine man has assumed a place of importance once again. Recently, Navajo medicine men, at the invitation of the Government, participated in the dedication of two Federal hospitals. They offered prayers which are used in the blessing of a new Navajo home.

When the Indian realized that the reservation system had destroyed his old way of life, that the future held little hope, he sought some means of escape, some way of forgetting his troubles. Thus he took up the peyote habit. Peyote, sometimes called mescal buttons, consists of the tops of the peyote cactus, a small, low-growing plant which grows abundantly in the valley of the Rio Grande. It causes an intoxication accompanied by most wonderful visions. Despite the fact that the Government forbade its use, the peyote habit spread, taking on religious significance. Edna Ferber inserts a paragraph to explain peyote worship, at the point where Sabra discovers Ruby, the Indian girl, teaching Cim the Mescal Ceremonial Chant.

She [Sabra] had heard about it; knew how prevalent among the Indian tribes from Nebraska down to Mexico had become the habit of eating this little buttonlike top of a Mexican cactus plant. In shape a disk about an inch and a half in diameter and a quarter of an inch thick, the mescal or peyote gave the eater a strange feeling of lightness, dispelled pain and fatigue, caused visions of marvelous beauty and grandeur. The use of it had become an Indian religious rite. 37

Today, under the new policy, the rights of the Indians to their own ceremonial and religious life is respected and encouraged by the Government, and the medicine man has assumed a place of importance once again. Recently, Navajo medicine men, at the invitation of the Government, participated in the dedication of two Federal hospitals. They offered prayers which were used in the blessing of a new Navajo home.

When the Indian realized that the reservation system had destroyed his old way of life, that the future held little hope, he sought some means of escape, some way of forgetting his troubles. Then he took up the peyote habit. Peyote, sometimes called sacred tobacco, consists of the seeds of the peyote cactus, a small, low-growing plant which grows abundantly in the valley of the Rio Grande. It causes an intoxication accompanied by most wonderful visions. Despite the fact that the Government forbade its use, the peyote habit spread, taking on religious significance. Mrs. Fetter inserts a paragraph to explain peyote worship at the point where there is a large Indian girl, reminding me of the famous scene of the film.

The peyote habit spread so fast that it was prevalent among the Indian tribes from the Rio Grande to the Pacific. The habit of eating this little button-like top of a small, red, fleshy plant. It shows a disk about an inch and a half in diameter and a center of an inch thick, the center of which is a small hole. The center of the disk is a small hole, the center of which is a small hole. The use of it had become an Indian religious and ceremonial. The use of it had become an Indian religious and ceremonial. The use of it had become an Indian religious and ceremonial.



John Mathews, the Indian author, speaks of "the conical Peyote church" of the Osage, and offers the following comment on Peyote worship:

. . . Most of the older Indians . . . lived their daily lives as the fathers had lived . . . The only change being that they now lived in houses with modern conveniences; radios, telephones, bathrooms and modern furniture. They were now Peyote worshipers, which was a mixture of the old religion, Christianity, and the new belief in passivity and retribution. 38

Who can blame the Amerind for trying to forget? His land, his religion and his tribal integrity gone, he saw no chance of ever regaining even a portion of them. Small wonder he sought escape.

The new policy, stemming from the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, has provided him with a glimmer of hope. He no longer is expected to accept Christianity but is given the freedom to choose his religion. A departmental order, (Circular No. 2970), approved by Secretary Ickes on January 27, 1934, forbade all future interference with Indian religious life, Christian or native. In The Enemy Gods Mr. La Farge gives the reaction of the Christian Missionary Board to the non-interference order:

"An interdenominational delegation is going to Washington," said Dr. Butler, "to ask the Commissioner for a definite answer, yes or no, as to whether he is an Atheist. Whatever his answer may be, his new circular order number D26L41 leaves us no doubt as to the dangerous nature of his policies."39

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38

John Mathews, Sundown p. 266.

39

Oliver La Farge, The Enemy Gods p. 237.

... the Indian author, speaks of "the colonial ...  
... of the ... and others the following ... on ...  
...

... most of the ...  
... lives as the ...  
... and that the ...  
... and modern ...  
... which was a ...  
... and the new ...  
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... the ...  
... and his ...  
... even a ...  
... the ...

... not at ...  
... is ...  
... to ...  
... approved by ...

... all these ...  
... is ...  
... the ...

... in ...  
... to ...  
... as ...  
... the ...

John ...

... p. 277.



## The Economic Phase

The practice of making payments and issuing goods and food to reservation Indians had its beginning back in the compensating treaties drawn up at the time the various tribes handed over their lands. For example, the Blackfeet of Montana were to have delivered to them each year, for ten years, \$35,000 worth of goods, and \$15,000 more was to be spent by the Government on schools and agriculture. Henry Tibbles, in Hidden Power, gives a very good picture of the way in which a treaty was drawn up, bringing out the trickery and double-crossing practiced by the representatives of the Government.<sup>40</sup> Even after the excess lands of many tribes had been taken by the Government, and a large number of them had nothing more to offer, appropriations continued just the same in order to maintain these tribes. In the case of the more hostile bands, it was considered a wise policy not only to continue but increase payments as a means of war prevention. When Perkins suggests the sum of \$200,000 a year be appropriated to the Indians on the Little Blue, a member of the Peace Commission objects:

"But two hundred thousand dollars a year is a very large sum," said Mr. Hughs.

"It is much cheaper than war," said Perkins. "This campaign has already cost over seven hundred thousand





dollars."

"That is very true," said Mr. Clark. "It is much cheaper to feed, clothe, educate and christianize the Indians than to fight them." 41

The Government never intended that the annuity system become a permanent feature of Indian Policy. Rations and payments were handed out in much the same manner as relief is handed to whites during a depression period. But just as long as the Government continued to feed, clothe and make payments, the value of self-support could not be expected to make any impression on the Indian mind. Mr. La Farge says:

. . . Rations were begun as a bribe to keep fighting nations quiet while their game was being destroyed, they continued as the left-handed gesture of a great nation which with its right hand deprived the people of even the hope of a livelihood. Without effort or self-respect it kept the Indian just above starvation. 42

Yancey Cravat, that dashing adventurer of the Cimarron Strip, cast a certain amount of romantic glamour over the reservation Indian and exaggerated his plight, but the truth of many of his statements cannot be denied. Part of one of his editorials in the Wigwam points out the evils of the ration system:

[The reservation Indians are slaves] but slaves deprived of the solace of work. What hope have they, what ambition, what object in living! Their spirit is broken. Their pride is gone. Slothful, yes. Why not?

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41

Thomas Tibbles, Hidden Power p. 152.

42

Oliver La Farge, As Long As The Grass Shall Grow p.32.

"It is very true," said Mr. O'Brien. "It is much  
easier to lead, advise, and control the la-  
borer than to fight them." At

The Government never intended the annual, winter be-  
come a permanent feature of Indian Policy. The law and regulations  
were made not in such the same manner as before it passed to  
allow during a temporary period. But just as long as the  
Government continued to lead, advise and control, the val-  
ue of self-support could not be expected to make any impression  
on the Indian mind. Mr. O'Brien says:

... Nations were born as a tribe to keep fighting  
and as such while their name was being destroyed, they  
continued as the left-handed gesture of a right nation  
with the right hand. The people of even  
the hope of a livelihood. Without effort or self-respect  
it kept the Indian just above starvation. It

... that Indian character of the present day,  
and a certain amount of romantic glorification over the past  
Indian and exaggerated his rights, but the truth of many of his  
statements cannot be denied. Part of one of his statements in  
the Indian points out the evils of the Indian system:

The reservation Indians are slaves but slaves de-  
rived of the color of skin. What have we done  
that makes them objects of pity? What rights do  
they have? Their rights are gone. Their rights are gone.

... Indian Policy, Indian Policy, p. 122.  
... Indian Policy, Indian Policy, p. 122.



The annuity system offered any number of ways in which the white man could profit at the Indian's expense. Contractors whose goods were purchased by the Government, transporters who carried the goods to the agency, politicians who sought their "cuts" from the money payments, traders who carried exorbitant rates to the Indian and Government employees- all these prayed fervently that the annuity system would never end. Joaquin Miller gives an intimation of this profiteering when he says:

. . . Each additional Indian contributes greatly to the Agent's income, for each Indian must be fed and clothed- or at least, the Agent is permitted to draw clothing, blankets and food for every Indian brought upon the Reservation. As to the Indians receiving these things, that is quite another affair. 43

Mr. Tibbles gives one instance, among many, of the manner in which the red men were cheated. At Perkins Agency the Indians were charged with 19,000 sacks of flour but received only 10,000.

. . . The flour had been, what is called in the Indian Ring parlance "double sacked". The army officer had inspected exactly the same lot over again, save the 1000 sacks which had been issued in his absence. 44

As soon as the Indian received his payment he made haste to spend it. To the trader's store he hustled as fast as his feet would take him. An ingenious arrangement of rooms in the agency building described in Onoqua separated the Indian and his payment in double-quick time:

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43

Joaquin Miller, Shadows of Shasta p. 29.

44

Thomas Tibbles, Hidden Power p. 330.





In the outer of the three rooms which made up the house sat the agent with his clerk, in the opposite outer room goods of all kinds were stored, and in the middle room was the agency store.

By the arrangement of the building, the Indians who went in at the office door did not go out that same way, but passed through the store and out again through the third room opposite the office. No one thought of resisting this arrangement which sent them into the trader's hands with their money from the agent still unpocketed. 45

Issue Day meant a holiday for the Indian. Several days before, he and his whole family, dressed in best attire, moved into the agency grounds, there to set up his tepee with several hundred others of his tribe. The Indian had always enjoyed gyp-sying about in pre-reservation days, and this journeying to and from the agency served as a good substitute now that he was expected to stay in a restricted area all year long. Several days of visiting, feasting and gambling lifted him out of his dull, drab, uninteresting existence into which he would sink once again when Issue Day was over.

The coming of the reservation was coincident with the passing of the buffalo and of buffalo hunting. With this in mind the Government thought it a good idea to give the Indians a chance to kill their meat, even though they were cooped up on reservations. The Beef Issue was one of the most spectacular features of early reservation life. After the cowboys eased herds of steers toward the reservation they were inspected, counted and held in close formation by night-riders. The fol-





lowing day they were released one by one from a large pen out into the open prairie to be shot by the Indian to whom a particular steer was assigned. "The poor victims, wild with terror and agony, fleeing for life without a possibility of success, ran the dreadful gauntlet which ended for them only with the fatal shot.<sup>46</sup> By tradition the meat belonged to the women, so theirs was the task of butchering and carrying it home. A Beef Issue was responsible for Chal Windzer's father's Indian name of "Not-Afraid-of-Rations". He explains:

. . . I don't know if the Osages will still be given names when you grow up, but you want a good one- a name that means somethin'. Like mine, Not-Afraid-of-Rations- that's my Indian name. It sounds funny, don't it? Well, when I was young I was the only one that would get into the corral with the gov'mint steers- the others were 'fraid of 'em- never seen steers before, and the smell of 'em<sup>47</sup> made 'em sick, too. That's what my name means translated.

Reformers of the eighties were right in believing that the land and its resources held the clue to the problem of Indian self-support. They were wrong in thinking, as Hamlin Garland did, that all Indians could make the transition from hunting to farming. As Mr. La Farge points out:

. . . They overlooked the vital fact that most of the reservations were in poor farming country, where the greatest future lay in cattle, calling under western conditions for large, solid blocks of land. Allotments varied enormously; some would be on summer range, some on winter range, some near the water-courses, others on high, dry grazing range. Only the combination of all

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46

Frances Sparhawk, Senator Intrigue And Inspector Noseby  
p. 14.

47

John Mathews, Sundown p. 31.





could make a cattle industry possible. 48

Frances Sparhawk refers to the struggle the Indians had trying to farm on land not suitable for farming:

They worked hard on their farms, if such tracts could be called farms . . . Nature had meant them for grazing, and in the race that now held them skill had not yet defeated nature. 49

Reformers of the eighties were wrong in thinking they could pattern the Indian's economy after that of the white man's. Ours is an individualistic society; theirs a communal. Individual allotment of Indian lands was not the solution to the problem of Indian independence. Sales of "surplus" land, laws governing inheritance of allotments, leasing and removal of wardship protection when the allottee was declared "competent" all operated mechanically to force the bulk of Indian lands into the hands of white people. That which was not lost became valueless because of improper usage.

Land is the Indians' principal economic asset. Their very survival depends on their intelligent use of what land they have left. Thus an important part of the New Policy is the reclaiming and restoring of land. Tribal ownership is being substituted for individual. Damages brought on by over-exploiting of soil and timber are being slowly rectified. The tremendous territory of the Navajo, - for example, was so badly eroded by over-grazing that

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48

Oliver La Farge, As Long As The Grass Shall Grow p. 27.

49

Frances Sparhawk, Onoqua p. 27.





in a few years it would have been useless for their sheep. Trying to persuade the Navajos that reduction of herds, improvements of stock and irrigation were the only means by which their economy could be straightened out was no easy task.

Not enough attention has been paid by the novelists to the break-up of reservations, or to the attempt made to rebuild the Indian estate. Few refer to it at all. Mathews, in Sundown, does mention various differences of opinion concerning allotments and oil leases, but without giving the reader much idea of what these signify, nor of what effects they produce. Hamlin Garland, who wrote his novel in 1902, believed allotment a good thing, but felt that the Indian, accustomed to living a communal life and too dependent upon his tribe, would fail to conform to the isolated, lonesome life of a Western farmer. He says in part:

Now the Dawes theorists think they can take this man, who has no newspapers, no books, no letters, and set him apart from his fellows in a wretched hovel on the bare plain, miles from a neighbor, there to improve his farm and become a citizen. If they were allowed to settle in groups of four or five they would do better. 50

La Farge hints at the distrust of the Navajos who are highly suspicious, even hostile, to the present administration. Since they did not accept the Reorganization Act, the Secretary of the Interior could have dissolved their tribal council and gone ahead handling their land problem in dictatorial fashion. Instead, he and the Commissioner have endeavoured to strengthen the tribal council, choosing to work through the slow, cumbersome democratic method, to carry out their reforms. They have tried to lead the







Navajo along with them. Myron Begay of The Enemy Gods speaks before the tribal council, giving his view on the subject of Washington's encouragement of a bigger and stronger council:

It is a trap, I think. They give us a big council, a government, so that they can run it and yet make us take the blame for what happens, I think. By and by we shall have few sheep, we shall be poor, we shall be hungry. We'll be glad, then, to get jobs building even more fences, I think. Then one day they can say, 'See, the Navajo have few sheep, and much land they are not using.' Thus they will say, pointing to the many measures of land covered with grass and flowers. So then they can sell that land to white stockmen, even inside the reservation. And we, we can go down to the railroad and sit by the stations, holding out our hands for nickels. That is where all this leads, I think. 51

D'Arcy McNickle ignores the story of the loss of his people's greatest remaining possession, their magnificent power site. From 1927 to 1935 the present Commissioner fought hard to restore to the Indians the right to develop this power site which had been contracted away by the Interior Department to a subsidiary of the Montana Power Company. After the Flathead people organized and incorporated under the Reorganization Act, they waged a successful battle for their share of the profits. Back in the early days of rationing the Indians had moved in close to the agency, building up a terrible slum area. A large part of them still live there, but the development of the hydroelectric power site has brought the Flathead tribe to the threshold of self-support. While Mr. McNickle describes the squalor and misery of







the inhabitants of the town close to the agency, he makes no mention of the Flathead Indians' greatest resource, the "white coal" of their reservation, which should eventually be the means of blotting out that squalid little town altogether.

### The Political Phase

After their long and courageous rear-guard action the conquered Indians were forced into the reservations to become a politically helpless minority. Their tribal affairs were managed first by the Office of Indian Affairs, a civilian department established in the War Department in 1824, control being transferred to an office of the newly-created Department of the Interior in 1849. The de-Indianization process dissolved their tribal councils and destroyed their self-government.

From the novel, Hidden Power, the greatest amount of information concerning the status of the Indian in early reservation days can be obtained. The book was written shortly after Mr. Tibbles had defended Chief Standing Bear in the Courts and much of the legal phase of that battle has been transferred to the novel. Mr. Tibbles points out that under the old system Indians generally were held to have no fee simple in their lands, nor protection of life or property from the law. They were at the mercy, without redress, of the absolute power of the agents of the Interior Department.

Hundreds of statutes restricted their freedom. Religious and cultural freedom were denied. Freedom of speech and that of persons communicating with the Indians was limited. Letter-





writing for Indians, under many circumstances, was made a felony by law. Thus, Inspector Brown had something on Mr. Parkman who<sup>52</sup> had been writing letters for Chief Red Iron. The Commissioner had the power to remove any person from any reservation if he considered the presence of that person "detrimental". How the Interior Department used that particular ruling to its own advantage! Acting Agent Brown used it time and again to get rid of those who were interfering with the plans of the grafting politicians whom he represented. He even went so far as to arrest a Deputy Marshal who had come to serve suit on him. To prove that he had legal authority to do so, Section 2149 of the Revised Statutes is quoted by Mr. Tibbles.<sup>53</sup> Lawyer Wilmot sums up the whole situation when he says:

. . . We have imposed upon them, the Indians, by superior force, the most infamous code of laws ever enacted for the government of any people. Just get a copy of the Revised Statutes of the United States, and read the sections under the title, Indians. It is the enforcement of these laws which has caused all the cruelty and wrong which they have suffered. . . They stand there, an impregnable fortification, behind which the thieves of the Indian Ring defend themselves, and any attack made upon them, until these, their defenses, are demolished, will end in total defeat. 54

Twelve of these oppressive statutes were repealed through the act which Congress passed on May 21, 1934. A good many more, denying civil liberties to the Indians, still remain on the books.

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52

Thomas Tibble, Hidden Power p. 279.

53

Ibid., pp. 294-295.

54

Ibid., p. 351.





Back in 1881, when Mr. Tibbles suggested that citizenship for the Indian was the solution to the Indian Problem, he was a voice crying in the wilderness:

Make the Indians citizens and treat them like all other persons. . . If these Indians who are under arrest here were citizens, they would have the right to choose their own counsel, but as they are 'wards' of the nation, the Secretary of the Interior is their guardian, and he employs their lawyers for them. 55

Not until the Dawes Act did we have any definite statement regarding citizenship for the Indians. Even then, that portion of Section Six which deals with citizenship did not include reservation Indians. In 1924 an act was passed entitling all Indians to citizenship, and binding them by all the obligations of citizenship. Most Indians are "ward citizens"; that is, in so far as their restricted or trust property is concerned they cannot deal with it, except with Government approval. An illustration is given in Sundown. John Windzer explains what followed after a group of "progressive" Osage attempted to give out their oil leases to a company of their own choosing:

This afternoon the agent got a letter from the Secretary of the Interior kickin' us all off the Council-' 'cause we let leases to the People's Oil Company, so they kicked us off the Council- they wanted the Reservation Oil Company to have the leases. 56

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55

Ibid., pp. 219-220.

56

John Mathews, Sundown p. 59.





The present administration's proposal to turn back the clock of time, encouraging tribal life and local self-government, has been called a theoretical and idealistic dream by those who condemn the policy of the Reorganization Act. Whether or not the subjugated, Bureau-controlled red men will be able to stage a complete come-back under the new system remains to be seen. Gains have been made, but much remains to be done.

The Surrounded, The Enemy Gods, People On The Earth and A Wild Indian have all been published since 1934, but none of the authors of these novels have gone into the story of the Indians' new opportunity for self-government, tribal charters, constitutions and elected representatives.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### APPRAISAL OF NOVELS

#### Their Literary Value

Wishing to espouse the Indian Cause, reservation novelists have chosen the novel as a vehicle for their propaganda because they were aware of the immeasurable superiority of imaginative literature in carrying a message to the popular heart. They knew that fiction, in its requirement of vividness in the presentation of truth is more adapted than any other literary medium to the exposure of injustice. Thus the majority of reservation novels are "novels-of-a-purpose".

What is the purpose which these writers have tried to accomplish-- to give literary protest against the foul conquest of a primitive civilization by an advanced barbarism. Through a presentation of the damaging effects of the white man's civilization thrust upon the red, the novelists have hoped to arouse and educate the American people to the sense of guilt which is theirs, to give truer understanding of the plight into which we have driven the Indians by our vacillating Governmental policies of the past one hundred and fifty years. These writers have striven to bring about a general social betterment among the tribes and to point the way to a more enlightened course along which we can steer our Indian Policy of the future. Imposed white civilization is the villain of each of the reservation novels.





As "novels-of-a-purpose" they carry with them all the deficiencies and short-comings of that particular variety of fiction-- too much purpose and too little art. In most cases the message has been placed ahead of artistic considerations. Most of the writers have been interested in subject matter rather than form. A sense of literary proportion is lacking. Often the pattern of the novel is disjointed, sporadic, the writing thereby uneven and impressionistic, and the story told too obliquely. The element of propaganda is strong, as it is in all literature of reform. Many of the stories are over-weighted with homily and partisanship. Perhaps the term "polemic" rather than "novel" would be more appropriate in describing the type of writing put forth by the reservation novelist.

As novels they are too crammed with facts to be good narrative. The authors make you feel they are straining to include in their novels every shred of information there is on the subject. Too many times the story is halted and slowed down because of interspersing of political and social episodes. The author of The Enemy Gods , - for example, desiring to give the reader an outline of the beginnings of educational reform under President Hoover, devotes the whole of Chapter Six (Part Two) to this purpose. Chapter Three (Part Two) is given over entirely to a discussion of political parties and the manner in which political leaders "played the game" with those interesting in seeking profit at the Indian's expense. When Henry Velt, the new teacher, presents himself for the first time to the agent of the Fort Reed Reservation the author of A Wild Indian allows the agent,





Major Long, to ramble off into a long discourse in which he traces the whole story of the United States Army's attempts to subdue the Indian in early days.<sup>1</sup> This hardly seems justified, as far as the story is concerned, but Mr. Miller is anxious to get in that particular bit of information regardless of how it slows down the story. Joaquin Miller apologizes constantly throughout Shadows of Shasta for the many digressions in which he takes time out to flay the Army, the Government employees of the Indian Service, the land-hungry whites who hover around reservation borders and others who have had a share in making the Indian's lot a tragic one.

Novels of the early group especially are characterized by sentimentalism, melodrama and over-statement of the evils of the case. Joaquin Miller's description of the reservation in Shadows of Shasta rivals any written on Alcatraz. No reservation could possibly be as bad as he has pictured it. In the attempt to present white civilization as the Black Beast of the situation almost all white characters are pictured as low, shiftless and degenerate. John Mathews does not allow a single attractive, or even reasonably decent, white American to cross the pages of Sundown. The same is true of Edwin Corle's People On The Earth.

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<sup>1</sup>

George Miller, A Wild Indian p. 13.





In this novel the white man first makes himself known to Red Wind's Son on the fearful wings of a United States Army plane, back in the days preceding the first World War. From that very day, the white man, that stupid invader of Johanoai's land, had cast his shadow over the lives of all the People, reflected Red Wind's Son. La Farge's Laughing Boy is a story of a Navajo youth and girl living under conditions wherein white thinking is a merely incidental intrusion. The story is far removed from American civilization, physical proximity being its only connection. Indians taking up white man's ways are nearly always victims of unhappiness; their lives almost always made to end in tragedy. The cards are stacked pretty well against Christianity, also. More often than not Christians are made to appear narrow-minded, foul-minded or stupid. By contrast, paganism has humaneness, beauty and poetry. The authors of the more recent novels, especially, would have us believe that only by rejecting the white man's religion and embracing his ancestral paganism can an Indian retain the values of his culture.

As in all purpose fiction, the characters become, of necessity, more or less of puppets, through whom the authors intend to drive home their message. Captain Curtis, of the Gray-Horse Troop, expresses Hamlin Garland's preference for the Army just as surely as if Mr. Garland himself were the leading character of the novel.

The present day reader has a hard time understanding how stories like Ramona, Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop and the





others of the early group ever made the impression they did make on readers of their day. Perhaps the change in reading tastes is the answer. Melodrama and sentimentalism are quite out of fashion now but the readers of early reservation novels accepted and enjoyed both. The reading public of earlier days had little aversion to preaching; modern readers resent it. They feel as did Francis Crawford who wrote:

The purpose-novel is an odious attempt to lecture people who hate lectures, to preach at people who prefer their own church, and to teach people who think they know enough already . . . as such, it ought to be either mercilessly crushed or forced by law to bind itself in black and label itself 'Purpose'. 2

The early reader could not spot propaganda half as quickly as the sophisticated modern who offers increased resistance to it as radio and press deliver a constant bombardment.

None of the reservation novels can be called truly great from the literary standpoint. The authors who wrote them were not literary artists of the first rank. With the exception of Helen Hunt Jackson, Hamlin Garland, Edna Ferber, Joaquin Miller and Oliver La Farge the rest remain a group of unknowns. In the case of some authors the Indian novels do not represent their best work. Hamlin Garland's fame rests on his tales of the rebellious Middle Border. Edna Ferber was successful in her "indoor" stories of the Mid-West, and Oliver La Farge gained distinction





by his scientific writings. In Mr. La Farge's case it is interesting to note how the curator of an American Museum reacted when told Mr. La Farge had gone in for novel-writing:

All that you say is bad news. [John Bird had been praising the literary merits of La Farge's first novel, Laughing Boy.] I don't believe it, and I shall be disgusted if it is true. You are a friend of La Farge. You are interested in his success as a writer. I don't give a damn about his writings. I don't give a damn for literature. I am interested in science, and in Oliver La Farge as a scientist. He is a first-rate anthropologist. We need him. We can't do without him. He's the only man who can talk to the Indians and get anything out of them. . . If he makes a literary hit now, he'll be ruined completely as a scientist. 3

With the exception of A Wild Indian the novels dealing with modern reservation life have been all molded from the same pattern. Young Indians of mixed blood hold the center of the stage; their adjustment, or rather, maladjustment to the white world, the theme to be developed each time. Plot is conceived from the Indian point of view; that is, very little occurs objectively. Whatever happens, happens not to, but within the man.

Writing effectively about the Indian is not easy, the modern reservation Indian, especially, being a difficult subject. Understanding of the complex Indian psychology and ability to go deeply into Indian consciousness are necessary equipment for the writing of a good Indian novel. Complete projection of





the author's mind into that of the Indian's way of thinking is almost impossible. Most Indian stories have been written by white men, but only an Indian can interpret, with complete authority, the psychology of a modern Indian, of the reservation Indian. La Farge acknowledges the truth of this statement when he says:

Most of us who tackle the Indian can, in the long run and with all our efforts, never do more than circumscribe them. To do that well is hard enough, perhaps impossible. Our Indians come out in the end, as products of the white man's mind, more or less approximating the men whom only the Indians themselves will ever know. 4

### Influence On The Indian Problem

Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin contributed nothing whatever to the ways and means of solving the complex questions bound up in slavery; Helen Hunt Jackson's Ramona and the rest of the reservation novels offer equally little in the way of constructive proposals for solving the Indian Problem. Yet, reservation novelists have had a share in the betterment of the lot of the red man.

In large scale reform not one but many types of workers are needed. The novelists have taken up the propagandizing end of the campaign and have done a good job of it. They have

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4  
 Oliver La Farge, "Indians To The Life," Saturday Review of Literature, 12:11, October 26, 1935.

the author's mind into that of the Indian's way of thinking is almost impossible. Most Indian stories have been written by white men, but only an Indian can interpret, with complete accuracy, the psychology of a modern Indian, of the reservation Indian. In large acknowledgment the truth of this statement may be seen.

None of us who back the Indian man, in the last two years, all our efforts, have done more than emphasize the fact that well as hard money, money is impossible. Our Indian man is in the end, as products of the white man's mind, more or less representing the man whom only the Indian themselves will ever know.

Influence in the Indian Problem

Barrett Browning's Uncle Tom's Cabin contributed nothing whatever to the ways and means of solving the Indian question, but it is a story; Helen Hunt Jackson's Indian Boy and the rest of the reservation novels offer equally little in the way of constructive proposals for solving the Indian problem. Yet, reservation novelists have had a share in the settlement of the Indian problem.

In large scale reform not one but many types of writers are needed. The novelists have taken up the propagandizing end of the campaign and have done a good job of it. They have

Oliver La Farge, "Indian Boy and the Little," Saturday Review of Literature, 1911, October 25, 1911.



reached the popular heart as no balanced account of history ever could. True, theirs is an emotional appeal and taken alone their works could never lead to any fruitful results, but by working on public sentiment, making it more malleable to the labors of reform legislators, they have performed a valuable service for the Indian Cause.

Their influence is rather intangible; no finger can be pointed to any specific good, nor can any instance of definite accomplishment be cited for any of them. Their real value lies in the fact that they awakened an apathetic public to a realization of the miserable conditions under which reservation Indians have been forced to live. John Greenleaf Whittier praises the "publicity value" of Onoqua by saying, "As a vivid presentation<sup>5</sup> of the Indian Question it cannot fail to do good." Of Senator Intrigue And Inspector Noseby Theodore Roosevelt said:

I thoroughly enjoyed it, and thoroughly believe in it. I think the story excellent. It made me both sad and indignant to think that such things are possible, and I think the publication will do great good. I am glad to have a copy for my own use. 6

The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop is supposed to have supplied Theodore Roosevelt with ideas which he put into practical use later, but there is no actual proof.

By far the most powerful of all the novelists was Helen

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<sup>5</sup>  
John Greenleaf Whittier. (A letter written by Mr. Whittier to Frances Sparhawk has been inserted in the supplementary section at the back of Senator Intrigue and Inspector Noseby.

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Theodore Roosevelt. (Same source as above.)

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John Greenleaf Whittier. A letter written by Mr. Whittier to Frances Spelman has been kept in the supplementary section at the back of Senator Intrigue and Inspector Waddy Thoburne Roosevelt. (Same source as above.)



Hunt Jackson, but here again no actual proof of the value of her writings can be summoned. Loring B. Priest pays tribute to her efforts in behalf of the Indians when he says:

. . . Mrs. Jackson had presented the case against the government so completely that later reformers could only repeat what she had said. 7

Prominent leaders of Mrs. Jackson's own day, Moorfield Storey, Ethelbert Talbot, Julius H. Seeyle, Bishop Whipple and Bishop Hare pay tribute to her, also, for her spade-work in the Indian reforms which they were able to accomplish. Mrs. Jackson herself says on her death-bed:

My Century of Dishonor and Ramona are the only things I have done of which I am glad now . . . They will live and bear fruit . . . The change in public feeling on the Indian question in the last three years is marvellous. 8

The Indian Cause progressed not only because of the labors of prominent writers like Helen Hunt Jackson and Hamlin Garland but also because of the work of many lesser workers like Frances Sparhawk, Gwendolen Overton and Mary H. Kinkaid whose local efforts, while they may have seemed insignificant in themselves, were effective in the aggregate.

The task which reservation novelists set for themselves has been a two-fold one; education as well as publicity. The red men have never caught the public's sympathies as did the

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Loring Benson Priest, Uncle Sam's Stepchildren ( New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1942), p. 62.

8

Albert Keiser, The Indian in American Literature ( New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 250.





slave, and most Americans have only vague ideas of the every day life of the Indian. If they think of him at all it is in terms of feathered head-dress, war-paint and beaded costume. Thus reservation novelists have written for readers who were not only indifferent but misinformed. Some of the novelists have acquitted themselves nobly in the educational part of the campaign, but others have only added to the already existing mass of misconceptions and fallacies. The majority intended to give a true presentation of conditions as they existed on the reservation about which they wrote, but in their anxiety to point out the evils of the situation they sometimes idealized the Indian, sometimes exaggerated his plight and treated him in sentimental fashion. Anyone reading Shadows of Shasta, and no other reservation novel, would get the idea that all reservations must be something like Sing Sing. Those reading A Chronicle of Conquest without reading George Miller's A Wild Indian might get the impression that Indian pupils are the answer to a teacher's dream, that in early reservation days the little Indians took to white man's education as ducks take to water. Edna Ferber's melodramatic Cimarron, with its "Arabian Nights" atmosphere, throws too much glamour across the red man's path. Reading of Cimarron should be followed by Mathews' Sundown which provides a much more balanced account of the Osage. Clark Wissler would blame these writers for retarding Indian progress. He says:

Perhaps no department of the government at Washington has been subject to so many sentimental drives as have been made against that of Indian Affairs. It seems

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 have been made a subject of Indian affairs. It has been



that after the Civil War, abolition sentiment shifted from the slave, theoretically no longer existent, to the oppressed Indians, and many rising authors had visions of a second Uncle Tom's Cabin. I am not contending that all this humanitarian effort was misplaced, and grant that the unfortunate lot of the Indian was made a little more bearable thereby. On the other hand, the constant yielding of the Government to these frequent drives, prevented the maintenance of anything like a consistent policy in adjusting Indian life to civilization. 9

But after reading further, learning how Mr. Wissler feels about the whole problem of Indian Administration, his criticism does not appear as sharp as it seems on first reading:

In our opinion, at no time, nor even now, has anyone the wisdom and understanding to give the country a first-class Indian administration. Social muddling through is the best to be expected. 10

Novelists who have dealt with the modern reservation Indian, the maladjusted Indian caught between two opposing cultures, have contributed to the Indian Cause, also, but in a more indirect way. They have produced novels of "social awareness". As such they have contributed valuable related material to the already existing factual literature in the field of sociology and psychology. The authors leave these maladjusted characters with their problems unsolved because at the present no clear-cut solution is in sight. Eventually, predicts Oliver La Farge, this suspended Indian will find his proper place by combining the best of each civilization in a realistic synthesis. In the words of Myron Begay:

Our world is changed . . . Just following the old Na-

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Clark Wissler, Indian Cavalcade p. 31.

10

Ibid., p. 35.

that after the first war, abolition sentiment shifted from the slaves, who were considered as human beings, to the oppressed Indians, who were living under a vicious oligarchy. I am not suggesting that all this happened at once, but that the Indian was made a little more human than he was before. In the other hand, the constant refusal of the Government to make financial drives, to prevent the mismanagement of money like a commercial policy in adjusting Indian life to civilization.

But after reading this, I am sure you will find that the whole problem of Indian administration, his education does not seem to change as it seems on first reading.

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Our social is changed . . . but civilization is the old



vajo way won't save us, and we can't walk in the white man's trail. We have to give up a lot of little ideas, that we have held because they were the best we knew. If we want to save ourselves, we have to learn to use the white man's knowledge, his weapons, his machines-and-still be Navajos. 11

who may not save us, and we ought to walk in the light  
and in the truth. We have to give up a lot of things  
that we have held dear, but we have to give up the  
things that are not of God, and we have to give up the  
things that are not of the world, and we have to give up  
the things that are not of the flesh. If we do this,  
we will be saved. If we do not, we will be lost.



## ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis has been to find the answers to the following questions:

- (1) Which American novelists have been interested in the Indian reservation as a background for their novels?
- (2) Why did they choose the reservation setting?
- (3) What have they told concerning the educational, religious, economic and political phases of reservation life?
- (4) How do their novels rank from a literary standpoint?
- (5) What influence have they had on the Indian Problem?

The preliminary task of unearthing novels of the "reservation" variety was made difficult because of the fact that no catalogue of reservation fiction exists. When the library of the Office of Indian Affairs acknowledged they could offer but little help, the problem became a challenging one. Information gleaned from source books, from library indexes, and from inquiries sent to publishers and leading organizations devoted to the Indian Cause resulted in the compiling of a list of sixteen novels in which the American Indian Reservation is given prominence.<sup>1</sup> In some, like A Wild Indian and The Surrounded, the entire action takes place on the reservation; in others, Cimarron and Shadows of Shasta, - for example, glimpses of reservation

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The list appears on page ix of the Introduction to the thesis.

# ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis was to find the answers to the

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The preliminary task of researching novels of the "reservation" variety was made difficult because of the fact that no catalogue of reservation fiction exists. When the library of the Office of Indian Affairs acknowledged they could offer but little help, the problem became a challenging one. Information gleaned from source books, from library indexes, and from inquiries sent to publishers and leading organizations devoted to the Indian cause resulted in the compiling of a list of sixteen novels in which the American Indian Reservation is given prominent place. In some, like A Wild Indian and The Burdened, the reservation takes place on the reservation; in others, Shadows of Shinarump and Shadows of Shinarump - for example, glimpses of reservation

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life appear intermittently, but in sufficient measure to warrant their inclusion in such a list.

The list of authors using the reservation setting is small but varied, a common interest in the Indian being its only unifying feature. Included are a former circuit rider, the daughter of John Greenleaf Whittier's physician, a Supervisor of Indian Schools, an anthropologist and an Omaha lawyer. The majority are unknowns, but a few have become famous along other lines. Joaquin Miller, poet of the Sierras, Hamlin Garland, spokesman of the Middle Border, and Edna Ferber, author of Show Boat are names familiar to all. Those best qualified for writing on the subject of the reservation Indian are John Mathews, D'Arcy McNickle and Oliver La Farge. Mathews and McNickle, reservation Indians themselves, are well fitted to know the inner aspects of problems confronting modern reservation Indians who are trying to "live white". La Farge, through long residence with the Navajos, has come closer to an understanding of the complex Indian psychology and has set down his findings more tellingly than any other white novelist on the list.

With the exception of Edna Ferber, all the authors had an ulterior motive in writing novels with the Indian reservation as a background, a motive beyond the attempt to entertain the reader, using the novel-form as a sugar-coating under which they could drive home their message. Their purpose has been to present a picture of the reservation Indian, or what is left of him, during and after the working out of white man's "de-Indian-





izing" programs, and to give information concerning conditions existing on reservations at the time of writing. Blame for the Indian's tragic lot is placed, to a greater or lesser degree, upon the United States Army, the Department of the Interior, Washington politicians, Agency Superintendents and our stupid system of Indian education.

The more recent writers have recognized in the reservation setting an opportunity to explore a new and almost untouched field. The attempts of the modern reservation Indian to adapt himself to his new-found freedom, and the bewildering and often grotesque results of increased intermingling with whites offer unlimited material for a completely new and fresh line of writing.

Novels depicting conditions at the beginning of the reservation era have presented a clearer picture of the economic phase of reservation life than have those who describe the more recent period. The Annuity System, with its rations and money payments, its spectacular Beef Issue reminiscent of the old way of life, have been described with clarity and vividness. The story of profiteering on the part of contractors, politicians and government employees, under the Annuity System and at the expense of the Indian, is well told, also.

Beginning in the eighties and coming down to the present, the subject of land ownership has been a vital one to those interested in Indian reform. The novelists have recognized the fact that Indian economy is centered in the land, but they have

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The more recent writers have emphasized in the reservation section as opportunity to explore a new and almost unexplored field. The attempts of the modern reservation Indian to adapt himself to the new-found freedom, and the bewildering and often grotesque results of increased intermingling with whites offer material for a completely new and fresh line of writing.

Novels depicting conditions at the beginning of the reservation era have presented a clearer picture of the economic phase of reservation life than have those who describe the social and family life. The family system, with its traditions and ways of life, the spectacular Bear Dance movements of the old way of life, have been described with clarity and vividness. The story of prostitution on the part of government, politicians and government employees, under the family system and at the expense of the Indian, is well told, also. Realism in the depiction and writing down of the present the subject of land ownership has been a vital one to these Indians in Indian return. The novelists have recognized the fact that Indian society is centered in the land, but they have



all taken too much for granted in expecting their readers to understand the story of land-allotment, with its break-up of reservations through heirship laws, leasing and land sales, and the policy inherent in the Reorganization Act of 1934. Only passing and indirect allusions are made to all of these whereas a few explanatory paragraphs are needed to illuminate their meaning. The result has been one of confusion rather than enlightenment.

With the exception of Frances Sparhawk whose treatment is an idealistic one, the novelists agree that Indian parents and children alike wanted no part of white man's schooling. As they explain further, there was little incentive for liking them. Miserable housing, hunger, over-work and strict discipline made prisons out of schools. The fact that education did not fit the child for return to reservation life is made clear by an expression common among reservation superintendents, "A returned student is as useful on the Reservation as an overcoat in hell."<sup>2</sup>

The reservation Indian has been portrayed as a strange mixture of pagan and Christian ways. None of the characters embracing Christianity have been wholly converted. In each case there has been "backsliding" and reversion to the old religion. Authors have allowed this to happen, purposely, because they wish to point out that white society had no business thrusting

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<sup>2</sup> George Miller, A Wild Indian p. 257.





its customs and beliefs upon the red race. They are against the de-Indianizing process and are anxious to point out that there is much in Indian belief and culture that is beautiful and poetic.

The disillusionment accompanying the realization that guarantees of self-government specified in the removal treaties were worthless has been carefully described in the early novels; the bewilderment and confusion caused by the numerous changes in Governmental policy mark the later accounts. Many instances are cited to show how completely the Indian was under the power of an autocratic Indian System. Illustrations of the workings of the Code of Indian Offenses prove to the reader that the reservation Indian was denied religious and cultural liberty and had no voice whatsoever in the government of his tribe. If brought to trial he could expect little justice from an Indian court, provided one existed on his reservation, because the judges of that court were responsible to the agency superintendent who had the power to direct, modify or ignore the decision of the Indian judges. In the novel, Hidden Power, the political phase of reservation life has been satirized most effectively.

When a novelist has an ulterior motive in writing, a motive beyond the attempt to amuse or entertain, he has to be a pretty clever writer to keep the story-value of his novel paramount. The author of Ramona has succeeded in placing her attack subservient to her narrative, but the others of the early group have not been as successful. They have produced polemics.





In their desire to expose the injustices responsible for the red man's sorry plight they have allowed their aim to run away with them, with the result that there is too much purpose and not enough novel. Later authors have been more subtle in their attack, but even in their novels characters are often buried under a pile of facts and seldom attain to a convincing reality.

Like Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, Ramona and the other reservation novels offer little that is constructive by way of remedying the abuses which they expose, but their value lies in the fact that they have awakened in an indifferent public a desire to do something to improve reservation conditions. Their individual protests have been followed up by reform organizations which, in turn, have been the means of having improved legislation enacted. In working on public sentiment reservation novelists have taken the initial step, have climbed the first rung of the ladder in the long, hard climb toward a better day for "Uncle Sam's stepchildren."





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